

THE CULT OF BRAHMA

TARAPADA BHATTACHARYYA,

M.A., D. Litt (Cal.),

Professor and Head of the Department of History,
B. N. College, Patna University, Patna.

Author of 'A Study on Vastuvidya', 'The 'Bodh-Gaya
Temple' etc.

Published by
C. BHATTACHARYA
DAHIAPURICOLA, PATNA-4

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

(PRICE--RUPEES EIGHT ONLY)

Pp. 1—186, Printed by
Swatantra Nava Bharat Press, Patna
Rest Printed by Free Press (P) Ltd., Patna

DEDICATED

TO

SRI ASHUTOSH GANGULI, M.A.

**Founder of the Hara-Ganga College,
Munshigunge, Dacca.**

WHO

**devoted his life and wealth for the promotion
of education, learning and
Hindu religion.**

P R E F A C E

During my studies on the problem of the Bodh Gaya temple, I realised that there was prevailing a very ancient cult of Brahma and Dharma, not only at Gaya but perhaps all over India. Further studies led to the writing of this book. During the investigation I have found light on many knotty problems of Indian religions and religious history of India which has been incorporated herein. The chapters were published in the Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna, in its issues Vols. XL, XLI, XLII. I am very grateful to the Society for having allowed me to publish the articles in this book form.

It is regretable that the Appendices could not be published in the aforesaid Journal due to the press being transferred from Patna to Delhi. I had to print them in another press. I had a desire to attach some plates to illustrate the last chapter, but I failed.

I hope the book will be of interest to scholars as well as all lovers of the history of Indian religions. I crave forgiveness from the readers for typographical errors and other defects in the book.

Patna }
1957. }

Author

INTRODUCTION

There were five well known cults in ancient India—the Saiva, Sakta, Vaisnava, Gannpatya and Soura. But all the Hindus believe that the three gods viz. Brahma, Visnu and Siva are the principal gods to be worshipped. In spite of this belief, no sect is known to have existed in India worshipping Brahma as its principal god. Scholars believe that in the later Vedic period, i.e. the Brahmana period, a god named Prajapati began to be worshipped, and he later on was known as Brahma. An attempt was made to make him one of the trinities but he never became a predominant god.

Study of the ancient religious literature has led one to conclude that Brahma was the earliest creator god of India. He was perhaps a pre-Vedic god. His worship was suppressed by the Vedic religion, but it survived in various parts of India, especially in Eastern India, among the Asuras of the Vedas, and even in the Historic period, among the low class people. All religions and sects, however, had to acknowledge their debts to and accept the authority of god Brahma. Even the Vedas are said to have been creations of Brahma. Jainism and Buddhism arose out of the cult of Brahma. The cult again made some progress after the fall of the heyday of Buddhism. It has been endeavoured to show that the Brahma cult as known in the pre-Vedic days included the worship of various gods of elements such as Water, Earth, Fire, Wind, and Ether, which in the Vedas were deified and in the Samkhya Philosophy, considered as some of the Tattvas out of which creation arose.

It has been further shown that the cult of Brahma or the creator god had assumed various forms in India and a strong belief arose about the sanctity of Numerals. This gave rise to a Ratra cult, which again were of various numbers—such as Navaratra, Saptaratra, Pancharatra and so on. Out of these the Saptaratra cult appears to have

been the most popular one. The Pancharatra cult is well known as a form of Vaisnava religion. But it was also at first a cult of Brahma, and later on there were Pancharatra cults of Surya, Visnu, Samkarsana etc.

The Brahma cult was perhaps at first the religion of the Brahmins and this theory has led me to a reconsideration of the origin of the Varna system in India. This religion was suppressed by the Vedic religion, then by Jainism, Buddhism and Vaisnavism in succession.

Brahma worship had assimilated that of many other gods, of which Kala, Dharma and Yama were prominent. There was a god named Dharma in ancient India, but scholars generally take him to be equivalent to the Buddha. I have tried to remove this wrong idea. The worship of the Mother goddess is known to have existed in ancient India and it was quite likely associated with the Brahma cult. The cult of Yama and the Sraddha ceremony etc. were also the results of the Brahma cult.

The knowledge of the existence of a cult of Brahma in ancient India will thus throw new light on various problems of Indian religions, traditions, and even art. It has been necessary sometimes for me to be very speculative, and conclusions had to be drawn from very meagre evidences but this was inevitable and necessary; for the materials are so few and the cult was so ancient and cleverly suppressed by so many later religions. It is for the Indologists to judge how far I have been successful in proving my hypotheses. I shall consider my trouble fruitful if it leads the scholarly world to turn their attention to further study of the subject.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. THE RATRA CULTS OF BRAHMA.

1—76. Pancharatra cult as worship of five gods—meaning of Pancharatra according to Schrader—Ratra cult related to a doctrine of number and theory of creation—meaning of Ratra in the Puranas—its association with Brahma and his body (tanu)—Brahma's body according to Vedic texts—and Puranas—origin of 'Ratra' and 'Deva' gods from Brahma's body—origin of Asuras and Devas—worship of various elements (tattvas) as creator gods—gave rise to worship of various 'numbers' 1—10. Influence of doctrine of number on Vedas, Brahmins and other religious systems 10—16. Doctrine of number gave rise to Sankhya Philosophy—relation of ratra cult with Kala Pitris, Seven Sages and Sikkhins—16—20. Various 'numbers' gave rise to various ratra cults—Dvadasaratra cult—Ekadasa ratra—Dasaratra and Dasagras of the Vedas—its tantric aspects—Navaratra cult—Hayasirsa Pancharatra and its meanings—22—28. Triratna cult—29—35. The most popular was the Sapta Ratra cult—its relations with Janmantaravada and ancestor worship (Sraddha)—Vedic Saptaratra—influence on Buddhism and Jainism—Puranic Saptaratra—35—40. Mahabharata originally a Saptaratra treatise on Brahma—converted later into a Vaisnava Pancharatra work—the Santiparvan references to Brahma—Avatars of Brahma—Narayana cult related to that of Brahma and Dharma—Mahabharata Pancharatra is really Saptaratra—origin from Seven Chitrasikhandins—made authoritative by Brahma—promulgated by Pitris—by Uparichara Vasu—significance of Uparichara legend—Narada legend refers to Brahma and Dharma—Hayagriva legend—Brahma's geneology—Pindadana related to Brahma cult—Ekanta Dharma—Seven births of Brahma indicate evolution of Indian religions—Ekanta religion allied to Buddhism—The Narayani Section was thus originally related to Brahma cult 41—50. The Geeta was originally a scripture of Brahma cult of 700 slokas—50—53—Saptaratra in the Markandeya Purana and Manu Samhita—Brahma's iconography—Puranas originally works on Saptaratra. 54 Pancharatra cult was Brahma's cult—Five forms of Agni—creator's five

forms in Brahmanas—Aranyakas Upanishads—in Jainism and Buddhism—Vaikhanasa Pancharatna, a cult of Brahma—Pancharatna Samiksha reference to Brahma—Manu—originators of Pancharatna according to Mahabharata—relation of Bhagavata Purana with Brahma cult—Ratra gods identified with Puranic gods—date of Vaisnava Pancharatna system—54—62. Suppression of Brahma's Ratra cults by Vedic religion—origin of Diva and Ratra gods from prevedic religious schism—Puranic legends about the schism legends of Yati: Yanyati, Bajeya—Vedic Yatis perhaps worshippers of Ratra cults—62-67. Zoroastrianism indicates struggle between Ratra and Diva gods—Pre-Hellenic religion related to Ratra cults—Doctrine of Numbers and transubstantiation in Greece—Orphic religion related to Brahma cult—Doctrine of Number in Babylon—relation with Brahma cult—Brahma cult and Egyptian religion 67-70.

CHAPTER II. THE WORSHIP OF BRAHMA—antiquity of the worship—method of worship—allied gods worshipped—sect of Brahma worshippers pp 77—125. Brahma the traditional creator god of India—is he unknown to the Vedas? Views of scholars regarding Brahma Prajapati, Purusha, Hiranyagarbha etc.—Different names of Brahma in different localities 77—81. Brahma in the Rigveda—as an epithet of Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati who was Vedic equivalent of pre-vedic Brahma 81—81. Brahma equivalent to and gave rise to Brahman of Upanishads 84—85. Prajapati in later Vedas—Brahma in Buddhist Literature 85—88. Vedic religion did not recognise god Brahma who was prevedic—Indian tradition places Brahma long before rise of Vedic religion—Brahma cult became an Asura cult in Vedic period—traces of Brahma worship in non-sectarian works 88—91. Ancient Tirthas associated with Brahma 91. Brahma worship—genealogy of Brahma in Puranas 91-92. Other gods associated with Worship of Brahma—god Atman—Satyam—Rudra—Kala—Kama—Dharma; who was god Dharma? symbols of Dharma—association with Earthgoddess—with ancestor worship

(Sradha and Tarpana)—Yoga system 98—104. Symbols of Brahma—Citi—Swan—Asvattha tree—wheel, pillar etc. 104—106. Vaisnava Avataravada taken from Brahma cult—106—110. A probable anthropomorphic image of Brahma and Kartikeya in the Indus Valley remains—in later iconography Brahma, Kala, and Dharma all associated together 110—118. Brahmins, the probable prevedic sect of Brahma worshippers—theories about origin of Varna system—occupation never the basis of the system—hence different Varnas were probably the various pre-vedic sects—Origin of later rigidities in the system—Sudras were never Dasas or slaves—113—123. Prajapati and Brahma—Brahma worship gave rise to later sects—123—125.

CHAPTER III. BRAHMA CULT AND JAINISM :

126—134. Mahavira's religion and Licchavi territory related to number 'Seven' & nine—influence of Upanishads & Tantric doctrines on Jainism—Jain theory of Ages—relation with Navaratra cult—126—128. Jainism before Parsvanath—related to doctrines of 'yatis' of the Vedic period—128-29. Tirthankars' heritage, names, symbols all related to Brahma cult—130—134.

CHAPTER IV. BRAHMA CULT & BUDDHISM

135—159. Locality of rise of Buddhism—indebtedness of Buddhism to existing local religions—Senart's views—influence of Mundaka Upanishad & Tantric doctrines on Buddhism—135—137. Was Buddhism influenced by Vasudeva Pancharatra cult—influence of Mahabharata and other Upanishads 137—139. Buddhist Janmantara Vada & legend of Kaushika in Purana—139. Influence of Triratna, Pancharatra and Saptaratra cults—140. Gautama's predecessors associated with Brahma cult—140. Buddha's ancestry and home influenced by Brahma cult—141. Life history of Buddha indicates influence of Brahma cult on his activities ; E.G. Why Gaya was selected as the place for meditation—Six Years' austerities—Jatila brothers—preparations for

Bodhihood similar to those for Sraddha ceremony meaning of fight with Mara—what was the Vajrasana—Earth goddess as his witness—performance of yoga and Upavasat vow—activities on following day at the Brahma Yupa and Vasudhara wall—performance of Nandinukha Sraddha 142—149. After Bodhihood—what was Ajapala Banyon tree—Mucalinda Naga—Rajayatana—starts for Varanasi at bidding of Brahma—why never returned to Bodhgaya 149—151. Sarnath: a place sacred to Brahma—idea of Dharmachakra taken from Bodhgaya—Origin of Buddhist trinity 151—153. Mahasudarsana Jataka taken from Brahma and Kala's cult and given Buddhist garb 154—56. Fall of Buddhism was due to revival of Brahma cult 156—57. Influence of Sraddha cult on Buddhism 157—59.

CHAPTER V. BRAHMA CULT AND BUDDHIST ART 160—186.

Image worship before Asoko—Asoka's contribution to Indian religious art—Asoka's religion before adoption of Buddhism—Significance and origin of Asokan pillars 160—167. Origins of Triratna symbol and Dharmachakra 168. Origin of Buddhist Stupa—168—171. Origin of Hindu and Buddhist Chaityas 171. Buddhist Reliefs and Jataka scenes in Sculpture 172. The figure of Gajalakshmi—was it Mayadevi or a goddess of Brahma cult (Sri)? 172—174. Four-horsed Chariot figures originated from Brahma's chariot 175—177. Ratna Chankrama Chaitya of Bodhgaya was a place of Vasudhara 177—178. Origin of Bodhgaya temple 179—182. Origin of Prasada type of temples and Buddha image 182—183. Brahma's pillar and Assyrian Tree of Life 183—184. Conclusions about Brahma cult. 184—186.

APPENDICES—pp. 186 ff.

- A. Ramayana and Ratra cults.
- B. Story of Kaushika and his sons.
- C. Legends of Trita.
- D. Evolution of Jagannatha.

THE CULT OF BRAHMA

By

Dr. T. P. Bhattacharya

CHAPTER I

THE RĀTRA CULTS OF BRAHMĀ

There was a well-known cult in India known as the Pañcharātra cult which is regarded by scholars as one of the earliest form of the Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava religion. The foremost tenets of this religion was the worship of Vāsudeva and his Vyūhas Sankarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The religion was thus a form of worship of Vasudeva (Krishna) and other Vṛishṇi heroes, later on philosophised in the Pañcharātra sacred literature. Many scholars, however, regard the Pañcharātra cult as a non-Vedic cult, later on accepted by the Bhāgavata religion and the Sri-Vaiṣṇava religion.

Though the Pañcharātra cult is thus a worship of four gods, we find one more personage viz. Śāmba, added in certain books as another member of the Vyūha. The reverence for these five Vṛishṇi heroes may thus be the reason why the religion was known as the Pañcharātra (the worship of five Rātras). But the word Pañcharātra has been defined in the religious books of the sect in various different ways. All the explanations refer to either 'five' gods or five forms of worship, or five kinds of knowledge. But the word 'Rātra' has also been interpreted in various ways, no book agreeing with the other. Why does the word 'Rātra' refer to a god was not explained clearly in any of the Pañcharātra Samhitas. It thus appears that by the time the extant Samhitas of the sect were composed, the Pañcharātra worshippers had forgotten the real meaning of the name and were blindly worshipping the Vyūhas. It further proves that the Pañcharātra doctrine was prevailing from a very early period long before the Samhitas were composed. The meaning of the word 'Pañcharātra' should therefore be critically examined.

F. Otto Schrader who has critically studied the Pañcharātra doctrine, in his "Introduction to the Pancharātra and Ahirbudhnya Samhita" tries to explain the word 'Pañcharātra' in the following way:—

"It may be supposed that the name Pañcharātra points to five principal subjects treated in that system. So it is understood in the apocryphal Nāradiya which says that the five Kāṇḍas of rātra=knowledge, are tattva, muktiprada, Bhaktiprada, yaugika and Vaisesika, i.e. they are concerned respectively with (1) ontology (cosmology) (2) liberation, (3) devotion, (4) Yoga, and (5) the objects of senses. Though the *five books* of the said Samhita accord but very imperfectly with this division, and the five Rātras of the Mahāsanat Kumara Samhita still less, (according to which the names of rātras are Brahmā, Siva, Indra and Ṛṣi Rātra, the fifth being not found in the Ms.), and though the Nāradiya as a whole can certainly not be used as a Pañcharātra authority, the above statement may none the less rest on good tradition. In this case Rātra, originally, 'night' would have come to mean—how we do not know—both a cardinal doctrine of a system as well as the chapter or work dealing with that doctrine, that is, it became synonymous with tantra and Samhita, so that Pañcharātra would be a designation of the ancient Vaiṣṇavite system in exactly the same manner, as according to the 12th chapter of the Ahirbudhnya S., Śaṣṭi Tantra was one of the Sāṃkhya Yoga. This explanation, though at variance with the chapter just mentioned stating that Pañcharātra consists of ten cardinal teachings (Samhitas), is at least not as fanciful as the night=obscuration, of the five other systems, or "the system, cooking=destroying, the night="ignorance", or the attempts to connect that name with the *five sacraments* or five daily observances (Abhigamana, upādāna, ijjā, svādhyāya and Yoga) of the Pañcharātras. However, it seems to us that the original use of the name is only connected with the first of the ten topics referred to (Bhagavat), namely the peculiar god conception of the Pañcharātras and that it can be discovered in the Pañcharātra

Sattra spoken of in the Satapatha Brahmana (XIII. 6.1) which is, moreover, the earliest passage in which the word *Pañcharātra* occurs. In that passage "Purusha Nārāyana is mentioned as having conceived the idea of a *Pañcharātra Sattra* (continued sacrifice for five days) as a means of obtaining superiority over all beings and becoming all beings"; and the preceding chapter (XII. 3. 4.) narrates in detail how He, by sacrificing himself, actually became the whole world. Narayana is thus connected with, and even made the author of, the Purusha Sukta which together with the *Sahasraśīrṣa* section of the Mahanarayana Upanishad, plays such a prominent part in the cosmological accounts and mantra exigencies of the *Pañcharātrins*. It appears then that the sect took its name from its central dogma which was the *Pañcharātra Sattra* of Narayana interpreted philosophically as the *five fold self-manifestations* of God by means of his Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin and Arcā forms. This would well agree with the statement in the Ahirbudhnya Samhita (Chapter 11) that the Lord himself framed out the original śāstra "the system (tantra) called *Pañcharātra* describing his (fivefold) nature (known) as Para, Vyūha etc. and "that highest will of Visnu called *Sudarsana* which he split into five appearing five-mouthed".

The whole passage from Schrader's book has been purposely quoted in order to show how the *Pañcharātra* works themselves were at a loss to interpret the word '*Pañcharātra*', especially the word '*Rātra*'. All the explanations referred to above undoubtedly show that *Pañcharātra* referred to five things, five gods, five books, five knowledge, five sacraments, five night's, sacrifice and ultimately five fold manifestations of God. Two more things are also apparent from the interpretations given above. The *Pañcharātra* doctrine was that of worshipping the various forms of God and connected with the theory of creation (Purusha Sukta and *Pañcharātra Sattra* above).

The *Pañcharātra Samhitas* thus failing to inform us the meaning of the word '*Rātra*', we should turn to the Puranas to see if they help us in this matter in any way. Most curiously,

several passages were discovered in the Puranas which dealing with creation say that "After creating, last of all, the Asuras, Brahmā gave up his 'tanu' (body) and this body became 'Triyāmā Rātri' or 'Rātri' or 'Vibhāvanī'. (Brahmānda Purana: (Calcutta Edition) Ch. IX; Garuḍa Purana I. 4. 23; Bhagavata III. 19; Markandeya P. 48. 6) These passages thus clearly indicate that the word 'Rātri' here should not be taken to mean 'night' as the scholars have so long done, but means 'the forsaken body or limbs of Brahmā after he gave up his life after creation'. Though the Puranas might be late, there is no doubt that this tradition recorded in them is authoritative and was handed down from a very early age. The Satapatha Brahmana (VII. 1. 2) relates the following story about Prajāpati. "Having produced creatures, Prajāpati became relaxed." The other gods like Agni, Indra, Rudra and the like, then resuscitated Brahmā by sacrifices. The other significances of the story will be discussed later on. It is sufficient here to say that the Puranas thus got the tradition of Brahma's death from the earlier Brahmanas, and it will be shown below that the Vedas also know something known as the 'tanu' of Prajāpati or Brahmā, the meaning of which has so long been unknown. According to the Paramatattvanirnaya-prakāśa Samhita (See Schrader), the appearance of the last tattva (i.e. the earth) marked the end of cosmic night and the beginning of day. Thus this reference explains why Brahmā's forsaken body after creation was known as 'Rātri'. With the creation of the earth, the creator's (Brahmā's) old or nightly form disappeared and his 'day' form began. The nocturnal forms of Brahmā were therefore the other four tattvas viz. Ap, Teja, Marut and Vyom, which were created before the earth. Thus it may now be inferred that the five rātras were the five tattvas (Sky, water, fire, wind and earth), after the creation of which Brahmā assumed a new form. Brahma's day began. The nocturnal form of Brahmā had disappeared. The Agnipurana (39. 7) definitely comes to our rescue, where it is said that the 'Panchabhūtas are the five rātras'. Thus from the above it is now

clear that the five tattvas or elements were known as the five Rātras. It is also clear that the rātras were the limbs or form of Brahma before creation of the world, the Vedas, asuras and other matters which are related in details in the chapters on creation in almost all the Puranas and the epics.

Further references to Brahmā's body may now be considered. In the Satapatha Brahmana (IV 6. 9. 20) we find reference to a Brahmodya explained by scholars as 'a discussion regarding the nature of the Brahman' which is held after a Sattrā. Egging adds the following note regarding it. "According to the Tandya Brahmana IV. 9. 4, as interpreted by the commentary, the performance consists rather in vituperative remarks on Prajāpati, who they have now safely got into their power (allusions being made, for instance, to his criminal relations with his daughter, to his having created thieves, god flies, mosquitos etc.). But the word 'Parivadanti' may simply mean that they discourse upon Prajāpati;* it is worthy of note that the Prajāpati-tanu formulas, preceding the Brahmodya proper, consist chiefly in the enumeration of negative qualities. 'The twelve bodies of Prajāpati are qualified as follows—the eater of food, and the mistress of food, the happy and glorious, the abodeless and daintless, the unattained and the unattainable, the invincible and irresistible, the unprecedented and unmatched.' Then follows the Brahmodya". These references to the Brahmodya and the Prajāpati tanu are significant in that even the Vedic (Brahmana) people perhaps identified the Brahman with Prajāpati and his various 'body' was known to them. We shall see later on that Prajāpati's incest with his daughter was also ascribed to Brahmā. Regarding 'Prajāpati Tanu', the Satapatha Brahmana (VI.1. 2. 17) mentions as follows: "Now it was those five bodily parts of his (Prajāpati's) that became relaxed—hair, skin, flesh, bone and marrow—they are the five layers (of the fire altar) and when he builds up the five layers, thereby he builds him up by those bodily parts; and as much as he builds up (ci), therefore they are layers". This passage indicates that it is connected with the Vedic legend mentioned before about Prajāpati's giving up of

his body. The Vedic people began to revive Brahma by setting up altars (citi) which were thus regarded as the body of Prajāpati. The same Brahmana next refers in several passages to the five bodily parts of Prajāpati—Those five parts are called five seasons, five regions.

The Aitareya Brahmana (v. 25) mentions twelve bodies (tanu) of Prajāpati. "The Hotār now reads the Prajāpati tanu mantras and the Brahmodyam. These twelve bodies of Prajāpati make up the whole Prajāpati.

In the white Yajurveda (XIII. 51-52) we find, "Within five things hath Purusha found entrance; these, Purusha hath within himself connected." Here Griffiths observes that "the five things are the five vital breathings."

In the Vishnu Purana, Bhagavatam and the Mahabharata, it is said that the primeval egg, out of which Brahmā came was covered up by seven tattvas (elements). Thus all these passages are quoted to show that speculations about the body of Brahmā or Prajāpati were going on in various forms in India even in the Vedic period. The creation story clearly relates how Brahma was once considered as having five limbs—the five elements. The philosophers later on thus took these five to be five principal sources of creation.

The meaning of 'Rātra' now being clear we shall have to refer to the other significances of the Vedic and Puranic tradition referred to before. Brahmā after creation gave up his body. The old form (body) became Rātra. The gods like Indra etc. tried to revive Brahmā by sacrifice. This legend can be explained only if we assume that after the creation (here referring to rise of the Vedas as well, for the Vedas arose with Brahmā), and the origin of the Vedas, Brahma worship in its old form was given up and the followers of the Vedic religion began to worship Prajāpati (Brahmā) in the new form of sacrifices. The old form of worship consisted in the worship of the 'rātra' gods i.e. the five tattvas or panchabhūtas—the earth, sky, fire, water and wind; and the new form of worship was the performance of sacrifice in honour of Vedic gods like Indra, Rudra,

Agni etc. When the creation was complete and Brahmā's day had broken, two religious sects arose. Some began to worship, according to the Vedic method, the gods of the day and others continued to worship the old body of Brahma, the panchabhūtas or the Pañcharātras. It is therefore that the Satapatha Brahmana (II. 1.3.1) says "The day represents the gods, the night represents the fathers." The Aitareya Brahmana (IV. 1.5) relates that "the devas took shelter with day and the asuras with night". The Bhagavatam refers to the asuras and Gandharvas taking away (i e. accepting as gods) the (forsaken) limbs of Brahmā. This tradition of association of gods with the day and of asuras with night is known in many of the Puranas and was explained by scholars as referring to the asuras being more active and stronger at night than at day time. But if the word 'Rātri' is properly understood, we may understand the real significance of the above associations. The Markandeya (Ch. 48) and Bhagavata Puranas therefore clearly say that while the forsaken bodies of Brahmā became rātri, the post-creation new (I say, Vedic) gods were known as 'Divā' or Day gods. From these traditions, are we to assume that the word 'Deva' really came from the word 'Divā' and not as previously explained by scholars? The origin of 'Deva gods' as opposed to 'Asura gods' as envisaged in the Vedic legends and the religious struggle in Iran of the Indo-Iranians, may thus be clearly explained.

From the above discussions we thus conclude that at a very remote past there was a religious schism in India when some people worshipped Brahmā in the form of the Panchabhūtas while others began to worship Brahmā (Prajāpati) in the form of sacrifices and worship of new gods now known as the Vedic gods. The followers of the old school were called the asuras—they were the followers of the Pañcharātra cult. The pañcharātra cult may therefore be safely assumed to have been originally a cult of Brahmā and not Vishnu or Vāsudeva. This cult involved the worship of the tattvas (elements) not only five in number, but of various numbers, all conceived as the creator or form of Brahmā, the creator god supreme of India. It has

thus to be assumed that there was a time when the worship of the various elements existed in India. This is apparent from the Indian cosmology. The people believed that the world arose out of water and it is quite likely that water worship was one of the earliest non-Vedic cults of India. Some scholars are of opinion that such a water cult existed in the Indus valley in prehistoric times. It was perhaps from this cult that the conception of a god named Nārāyana arose, who was not at first identified with Vishnu. Nārāyana (offspring of Nārā) was the deified form of the the water god, later on becoming the creator god and identified with Vishnu by the Vaiṣnavas. The worship of the Earth goddess might similarly have arisen out of the belief that 'Earth' was a form of the creator. The worship of Earth goddess was also a prehistoric affair in India.

The explanation of the word 'Pañcharātra' as given in the Samhitas indicates that the rātri worship was especially allied to the numeral 'five', five knowledge, five rites, five gods etc. One of the principal features of the Rātra cult was therefore the worship of a group of gods of a particular number all conceived as the cause of creation. The rātra gods were regarded as the gods of creation. But there was great difference of opinion as to who was or were the creator god or gods, or from how many elements the creation arose. The Ahirbudhnya Samhita thus refers to Narada's complaint that there are many different opinions about creation, some holding that it is affected by three elements, others assuming four, others five, others six and so on. Eleven elements have in this way been regarded as the sources of creation. Schrader (Ahirbudhnya S. Ch. 8) has tried to explain the various theories based on the Pañcharātra Samhitas. Thus the three elements which are believed by some to be the cause of creation are fire, water and earth, as in the Chandogya upanishad vi.4. Four elements of creation=earth, water, fire and air (as according to a materialistic teacher of Buddha's time and to the Buddhist Janaka sect).

Five elements of creation=The four as above and ether
(of Upanishad).

Six elements=The five above and Soul (as in Jain scriptures.)

Seven elements=The four above+*soul*+*pleasure* and *pain*
(cf *Saptakāyāvāda* of the rival of the
Buddha, Kakudhā Kātyayana and
some later philosophers).

Eight elements= Five above + *Ahapkāra*, *Buddhi* and *Manas*
(*Gītā* VII. 4) or Eight *Aksharas* (five-
elements+*Sun.* moon and stars) of the
Ahīrbudhnya Sambita.

Nine elements= Eight +*Soul* (*Gītā* VII. 4—8). In this way the
eleven different opinions held that the creation arose out of
eleven elements (*tattvas*).

The *Pañcharātra* text hereby shows that creation was thus
ascribed to eleven *tattvas*. The same texts also refer to five
gods which were the objects of worship of this system. All
these gods were also regarded as creators. It is quite natural to
suppose that along with the creator gods or the creator, the
tattvas were also object of worship of the people, as is evident
from the fact that the *tattvas* known as '*rātri*' had really become
object of worship of a special sect. The *Saptakāya Vāda* of
Kakudhā Kātyayana also indicates that even before the Buddha
there existed a '*Kāya*' theory of creation, which is similar to the
'*tanu*' or '*Rātri*' theory of the *Puranas* and the *Pañcharātrins*.

As creation was thus explained with reference to the various
number of elements, these elements were regarded as the body
(*tanu* or *rātri*) of the supreme creator God *Brahmā*. Those
who regarded creation as the result of five elements or
rātras were probably called the *Pancharātrins*. Those who
regarded creation coming out of seven elements may be called
by the name of *Saptarātrins*. It will be shown below that there
was in India a religion called the *Saptarātra*. Similarly the ex-
istence of *Trirātra*, *Navarātra*, *Dasarātra*, *Ekādasatātra* and
Dvādasarātra religions may also be shown to have existed in
India.

Similarly we find, that as the *Pañcharātra* system arose out
of the worship of five bodies(*tanu* or *rātri*) or forms of the creator

God, the number 'five' had become a favourite numeral of that sect. It will be shown that special sanctity of certain numbers, as found among all the religious sects of India, had their origin from the different theories of creation and the different forms of the creator Gods. Those who believed Vishnu to be the Supreme god regarded him as the creator, others might ascribe creation to a mother Goddess and so on. But as said before, the word 'rātra' had first originated from the various forms of Brahmā. Difference in opinion regarding the form of the creator God (Brahmā) led to the rise of the Trirātra, Pancharātra, Saptarātra, and Navarātra forms of doctrines. Along with it arose the special sanctity of the various numerals.

The sanctity of the numerals had always been exerting influence on the minds of the Indians. Every numeral had a mystic significance. In astrology, prophecy is still done on a "theory of numbers". As astrology was a part of the Indian mystic rites, it is likely that this sanctity arose out of association of magic with the primitive religions of India. The Vedic people were also not free from this theory.

The earliest reference to 'Rātri' meaning a god (night or something else) is found in the Rigveda (X.127). Here 'Rātri' is invoked as 'divine' and 'a goddess', daughter of the day. The word 'Rātri' in the Aghamarshana hymn cannot mean 'night' as 'night and day' are mentioned afterwards in the same hymn. In the Atharvaveda (XIX. 47) and the Vajasanayi Samhita (34, 32) as well as the Nirukta (IV. 29), there is another hymn where 'Rātri' is identified with 'Durgā' either in the figurative sense of a 'protectress' or the goddess Durgā of the Puranas. The Atharvaveda hymn has some features which may connect the hymn with a rātra cult of Durgā. This hymn is followed by several others addressed to 'night' (A. V. X. 48; 49; 50) and they are followed by a hymn to Kāma, and then by two addressed to Kāla. Both these two gods will be later on shown to have especial relation with the creation legends and hence with the rātra cult of Brahmā. In this hymn (no. 47), the third, fourth and fifth verses have some reference

to "examiners or sentinels of Rātri", or to the followers of the Rātri. (See Griffith's *Athārvaveda*, vol II, f. n. P. 305). The number of these sentinels are said to be 99, 88, 77, 66, 55, 44, 33, 22, 11 or fewer still. These numerals have arisen out of the multiplication of 11 by 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 etc. respectively. Thus the numeral 11 and the other numbers must have had some special relation with 'Rātri' the Vedic god or Goddess; and, as said before, the numerals nine, seven, five and three will be shown to have especial relation with the 'rātra' cults of Brāhmā. This number (11) was also favoured much by the Vedas, as the gods therein are called 'thrice eleven' or 'living in the groups of eleven in three places'. (*Rigveda* 1.139, 11 etc. *Yajur Veda* VII 19. etc.) These hymns to 'rātri' and the mystic relation of this god with the numeral eleven may be taken to suggest that there was really a very ancient doctrine of 'Ekādasa rātri', as is also evident from the fact that the *Pañcharātra Samhitas* refer to creation having come, according to some, from eleven elements.

A similar hymn popularly known as the 'Rātri Sukta' is found in the *Samavidhāna Brahmana* (3. 8.2). In a Verse the 'rātri' is addressed as 'Sikhandini' the commentators taking it to mean 'Vaisnavi'. It, however, appears that this word 'Sikhandini' has some relation to 'Sikhāndins' the authors of the *Pañcharātra* cults according to the *Mahabharata*, and such other words of the Rātra cult (see below). The hymn further contains invocations to six other gods. These six gods and the goddess 'rātri' thus make up seven gods which points to a form of the rātra cult (ie *Saptarātra*). The commentators, in fact, take 'rātri' as the 'Brahmamayī Devī, i.e. a goddess related to the Brahman or Brāhmā. The goddess is further called 'Punarbhū' i.e. being born in various forms again and again. It will be shown later on that the *Avatāravāda* and rebirths were especially connected with and perhaps had originated from the rātra cult of Brāhmā.

The influence of the doctrine of holy numerals may be found in all Vedic literature and rituals. In the *Rigveda*, the Maruts

are said to be sixty-three, divided into nine troops of seven each ($9 \times 7 = 63$). In later times the Maruts became forty-nine in number ($7 \times 7 = 49$). Regarding Agni, Macdonell writes, "Agni is often regarded as having a triple character, which in many passages is expressly referred to with some form of the numeral 'three.' Thus, Agni's births are three; he has three heads, three tongues, three bodies, three stations. Agni is even one of the three brothers. Macdonell further writes, "This earliest trinity is important, for on it is based much of the mystical speculation of the Vedic age." "This three-fold nature of Agni was probably the prototype not only of the posterior triad, Sun, wind and fire (Rigveda VIII. 18), but also of the triad of Sun, Indra and fire, which though not Rigvedic, is still ancient". Agni is also sometimes associated with the number 'Seven'. Agni is said to have seven rays (Rigveda I. 146 1; 2.5.3). He has 7 tongues (Vajas. Sam 17.79); his steeds have also 7 tongues (V.S. III 6. 2) Agni is further said to be five-wayed, threefold or seven threaded (Rig. X. 52. 4) and 'threefold with seven threads and five divisions (Rig. X. 125).

The white Yajurveda also associates the number '7' to many things. Agni had seven logs, seven tongues, seven mansions, and seven Rishis. It is remarkable that in the Vedas, not only the numeral 'three' is particularly sacred, but the number of gods was also at first three and then 33, then 3303 and in later Hindu tradition the number rose to 33 crores.

According to the Satapatha Brahmana (II. 5. 1. 12 ff) "Prajāpati set aside for the Maruts that share, the Marut's cakes on seven potsherds." The Daśapūrnāmāshi Sacrifice begins with thrice sweeping the hearth, thrice besmearing with gomaya, drawing three lines, and thrice sprinkling water on the lines. Three fires are then kindled and logs are put on the fire in three ways. "Prajāpati is the year. Let him recite 17 Samidhīni verses. Twelve months there are in a year and five. (not six) seasons. This makes seventeen fold Prajāpati" (Sat. P. Br. 1. 1. 1. ff). "These then are the five Sambharas, for fivefold is the sacrifice, fivefold the animal victim and five are the seasons

(Sat. Br. II. 1.1.12). Like Agni, Surya was also associated in the Brahmanas with the numeral 'seven'. Thus "The Hotar ought to repeat verses in all seven metres for Surya, for there are seven worlds of the gods" (Ait. Br. IV. 1. 5. 9). "Prajāpati created the world, earth, air, heaven. Three lights were produced—Agni, Vayu, Aditya. There arose three Vedas, three luminaries and then three sounds." Here we find the numeral "three" being sacred to creation.

In the Aitareya Brahmana (IV. 1.1.) we find "On the fourth day the Hotar repeats the Sholasi shastra. The Sholasi is the thunderbolt. Whence comes the name Sholasi ? There are 16 Stotras and 16 shastras. The Hotar steps after 16 syllables. He puts in it a nivid of 16 Padas.' On this Haug remarks, "The number 16 prevails in the arrangements of this shastra, which is itself the sixteenth on the day on which it is repeated. The whole term means the sacrificial performance which contains the number "16". Further, "Prajāpati felt a desire to create and to multiply himself. He underwent austerities. After having done so, he perceived the Dvādasāha sacrifice in his limbs and vital airs." "The Dvādasāha is Prajāpati's sacrifice. At the beginning Prajāpati sacrificed with it." (Ait. Br. IV. V. 23 ff) In this Brahmana, nine principal days of the sacrifice are mentioned. According to Haug, they constitute the Navarātra i.e. sacrifice lasting for nine nights (and days). According to Eggling (note on Sat. Br. IV. 5-8) there was a Navarātra sacrifice which was a part of the Dvādasāha sacrifice. It has already been shown that the Satapatha Brahmana refers also to the Pañcharātra sacrifice of Narayana. Thus in the Brahmanas we find references to the Dvādasāha, Dasarātra, Navarātra, Pañcharātra and Trirātra sacrifices, connected with Prajāpati and Narayana. These sacrifices are quite distinct from the cult known as the Pañcharātra, and also the cults Navarātra, Saptarātra and others the existence of which will be discussed later on.

In the Aitareya Brahmana as well as the White Yajurveda number '17' was sacred to Prajāpati. Regarding Yajurveda IX.

10, Griffiths adds the following note, "seventeen being the number sacred to Prajapati, seventeen four-horsed chariots have been prepared. + + + + An Udumbara tree has been planted in the ground at a distance of seventeen bow-shots from the starting place. + + + + The Brahmana beats one of the 17 drums ranged along the edge of the altar ground.

In the white Yajurveda (IX. 31 ff) we find how different gods with different number of syllables won different things of same number as of the syllables. Thus with the monosyllable Agni won the vital breath, with trisyllables Vishnu won three worlds, with six syllables Savitar won six seasons and so on, till 17 such syllables and their results are mentioned. The same Veda (XIV, 28 ff) refers similarly to things of various numbers with which people praised Prajapati and various things were produced with a god as overlord. "With three they praised, priests were produced and Brihaspati was overlord". "With seven they praised, seven rishis were produced, Dhātār was the overlord." These verses include such numbers, ranging from three to thirty-three and it is curious to note that all these are odd numbers. The rātra cults of Brahmā, as will be shown, were also composed of such odd numbers.

All the above instances indicate that in the Rig and later Vedic periods, people were already acquainted with the magic spell of the numerals. Numbers were symbolically explained, sacredly mentioned and referred to creations of various things—the priests, gods, rishis and so on. The most elaborate play with the numbers is, however, traced in the Atharvaveda (VIII.9) The whole hymn has been called a Brahmodyam consisting of cosmogonical, ritual and metrical doctrines. It is unintelligible to scholars. As it is related to Brahman or Brahmā, I venture to say that the hymn is a clear illustration of the relation of the 'doctrine of numbers' with the creation cult or the cult of Brahmā. Herein we find how different numerals are correlated to different groups of things. The hymn begins with the numeral '2—and two calves of Virāj'. Then it refers to '3'—the "mighty three—threefold home." Then comes the

number 6— 'Brihati is the sixth'. Region as the sixth', 'sixth day'. 'Six present Rishis.' Then comes the numeral five—"Five milkings, fivefold dawning, five seasons, cow who bears five titles, five sky regions." Again we have 'six elements, six day time carried by six Śamans, six-yoked plough, six earth and heaven, cold months six, six hot months." Then regarding numeral 'Seven', we have, "Seven sages, seven metres, seven consecrations, Seven Homas, seven logs for burning, seven streams of mead, seven seasons, seven streams of butter, seven vultures, seven metres." The numeral "8" is illustrated by "eight elements, eight divine priests, eight wombs of Aditi, eight children of Aditi." Further, "for the eighth night is libation destined." Then further we find, "To Indra eight, to Yama six, seven to rishis, seven to each." The numeral 'five' is then associated with waters, men and healing herbs. After thus playing with numerals three to eight, the hymn ends with the number "One". "Who is the cow? Who is the single Rishi? what on the earth is the one only spirit?" and still further we have the sight of the Indian monotheism. "One is the cow, one is the single spirit, one is the law, single are benedictions."

"The spirit Dwelling on the earth is single,

The single season never is transcended."

Whatever be the meaning of the whole hymn, there is no doubt that numerals as in this *Brahmodyama* had undoubtedly been associated by ancient Indians with their gods, the creator (Brahman or Brahmā, whoever he might be) and the theory of creation. This importance of numerals is found even in the Upanishads, the Epics and the Puranas. Even the Jains and Buddhists attached special importance to particular numerals with regard to their gods or other matters of religion. That these numbers had originally a special relation with the Rātra cult is evident from the tradition which persisted till the time of Anandatirtha, the commentator of the *Aitareya Aranyaka*. (See below his remarks on *Ait. Ar. II. 3. 1. ff*). It is also evident from the fact that to the name of no other religion is added a numeral.

An interesting feature of the cults based on 'numbers' is that not only are the numerals added or multiplied, but often they are subtracted. Elimination of 'one' from various groups of deities or things is a characteristic of many of the ancient doctrines. In the Vedic period there were eight Adityas born of Aditi. But the eighth, Mārtanda was cast aside and only seven of them were worshipped (Rig. X. 72. 8-9). According to the Puranas there were eight Vasus but the last Vasu was discarded and worship is now offered to seven of them. In the Bhagavata Pañcharātra cult, there were really five Vyūhas, but the last one Sāmbha was not included in the Vyūha in the orthodox Bhagavata texts. In the story of Sri Krishna, the seventh child of Devaki (Samkarshana) has been withdrawn from the real womb to another, a clever way of mystifying or eliminating it from the Krishna cult. This elimination process perhaps gave rise to the odd numbers being added to the names of the rātra cults, Trirātra, Pañcharātra, Saptarātra and so on. The Vedic people, however, be it observed, were more favourite of the even numbers. It was this process of elimination that led the Samkhya system to declare the tattvas to be 24 in number, whereas really they were 25 (as shown by Samkarāchārya). The Pandavas in the Mahabharata were six, born of six different gods, but the eldest of them Karna was cast away. This play with the numerals later on also gave rise to impossible numbers being ascribed to the calculation of years, days and nights of Brahmā, not by only the Hindu legends but also by the Buddhists and Jains.

The mystic system of numerals was thus prevalent in India in a very ancient period. All the later religious sects were influenced by this. The origin of this, however, may only be traced from the rātra cult in which special stress was given to the sanctity of numbers. Creation was attributed to such a holy number as was held to be sacred by the followers of different views on creation. The tattvas held to be the source of creation were worshipped by the followers of the rātra cult. Gradually when a philosophy of this sect grew up, the philoso-

phers ascribed creation to something related to the gods or tattvas worshipped by the members of the sect. These creative principles were of various numbers due to existence of various opinions and sects. Some upheld that creation came out of three, some five, some seven and similar other number (Samkhyā) of gods or tattvas. It was therefore, that the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy wanted to solve the problem viz. what exactly was the number of things or principles which were responsible for creation, by the knowledge (rātra, as explained in certain Samhitas) of which one might attain salvation. Thus the Samkhyā system was a philosophisation and synthesis of the popular cults of worshipping different elements as sources of creation. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta also holds that there was an earlier theistic Samkhyā system. In fact the 'Mahat' of Samkhyā was only another name for Brahmā, and there is evidence to show that a god called 'Mahat' was worshipped in India, in a very ancient period, as will be shown later on. The Samkhyā philosophy may thus be held to have originated from 'Samkhyā (number) of the rātra cult or the Brahmā (creator) cult. This rātra cult was a non-Vedic cult and so was the Sāṃkhya. Later on all religious sects accepted the Samkhyā doctrines and attempts were made to show that the system was based on the Vedas; but Samkara proved that the attempts were futile. It will be shown later on that this Samkhyā system and its authors were the objects of especial veneration by the followers of the rātra cults.

The Rātra cults were further related to a god Kāla, the Pitṛins and several holy Rishis. Thus the Puranas, while relating the creation legends (with which, as shown above, the Rātra cults were primarily concerned), relate that after the flood when Brahmā was again engaged in creation, the Mahārshis (seven in number in each kalpa) were looking upon it from the Mahat-loka. They found Kāla in a sleeping state and every night they watched the sleeping Kāla (cf. Brahmanada Purāna, Calcutta Edition). Whatever be the meaning of the legend, there is no doubt that creation, according to the Puranas

was associated with Brahmā, Kāla and the seven Rishis. According to the Pañcharātra Samhitas also, Purusha, Prakṛiti and Kāla gave rise to the lower primary creation. Even the Buddhist texts called the gods of different Manvantaras by different names—Tushita gods, Yāma gods etc. The word 'Yāma gods' might have some relation with Yama or Kāla. This relation of the rātra or creation theories with Kāla and the Rishis will further be discussed later on.

It has already been related that according to the Satapatha Brahmana 'the night represents the fathers' (Pitṛins). It may thus be inferred that the worship of the 'rātri also involved worship of the 'Pitṛins' (ancestors). Ancestor worship or the Srāddha cult thus became a part of the rātra cults. It is likely that this ancestor worship, including Srāddha and Pindadāna was not quite a Vedic religion, but has been referred to in Vedic literature as the 'Pitṛi-Yāna' as opposed to 'Deva-Yāna, the worship of the devas or Vedic gods. The word 'Yāna' here perhaps should be taken in the sense of 'Yāna' in the terms 'Mahāyāna' 'Hinayāna' and the like—i.e. a means or vehicle of salvation. Hillebrandt upheld the theory that the Rīgveda represents the worship of Devayāna. Keith, however, objected to it by pointing out that the Veda also knew the 'Father worship.' (Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas etc. pp. 14-15) Upanishads deprecated the 'Pitṛiyāna; but the Upanishadic 'Devayāna' is not exactly the worship of the Vedic gods, for Yajna (Sacrifice) is placed under Pitṛiyāna. The Vedas perhaps had taken up ancestor worship from the earlier Indian non-Vedic cults and in a later period, the Upanishads decried both the Vedic yajnas as well as ancestor worship. Though the character of 'Pitṛiyāna', that is the doctrines of the people upholding ancestor worship, might have changed from age to age, 'Pitṛiyāna' originally was the non-Vedic form of ancestor worship, a part of the rātri cult. The Satapatha legend mentioned above clearly relates that day represents the gods, night represents the fathers (also compare the Aitareya legend, mentioned above). There was thus a fundamental difference between the two

Yānas. The Vedas gave a new colour to Pitṛiyāna (See below the Vedic tradition of the suppression of the 'Pitṛins' by Indra—Bṛihad Aranyaka Upanishad 6.2.15) The Srāddha and Pindadāna ceremonies thus may be inferred to have originated from the rātra cult and hence it is that these ceremonies will be shown later on to have special relation with the authors of the Samkhya system.

The rātra cults are always found associated with a rishi 'Panchasikha' and 'Seven Chitra Sikhanandins', as seven rishis are always related to the legends about creation. This is a very interesting characteristic showing the antiquity of the rātra cult. The Jain religion has 'Sikhi' as their emblem (see, chapter on Jainism). The first Buddha was called 'Sikhin'. The Rigveda (VI. 27) refers to Varasikha's children being killed by Indra at Hariyupiyā (identified with Harappa) on the Yavyavati. Varasikha was the leader of the Vrichivants (from Varasikha's son Vrichivan) who fought against the Parthava Chayamana. Indra is said to have helped the latter. Thus Varasikha was opposed to the Indra cult (Vedic cult) and we may also infer from the above facts that these words 'Sikhin' etc. were associated with certain non-Vedic cults of India. In the Tantric Chandramaulirahasya we find "Phaṇ Sikhiku-bjinibhyām namah." In the Brahmananda Purana (ch. 23 115) Rudra is said to have been born as 'Sikhandin'. Rudra's children were known as 'Sikhandi or matted, or shaven headed or half shaven". In the wellknown Devi Sukta, the Devi is addressed as 'Sikhandini'. The epithet 'Sikhin' was also applied to Sri-Krishna. The word is explained in later times as 'Vaisnavi'. The Pañcharātra Jayākhyā Samhita refers to 'Sikhins' as one of the five groups of Pañchrātra followers. The real meaning is perhaps something else. The words may be taken to mean 'having a horn' (cf a bull is called Sikhin). If this meaning is accepted, it reminds us of the fact that many of the images of gods, found on the seals from Mohenjodaro and Harappa, have horns on their heads. Marshall notes that such horns were used to denote a deity or was worn by

kings and priests in ancient Sumer and Babylon. Bulls' horn was also a special feature in the worship of Zēus of Greece. Marshall also notes that the demon Sushna in the Rīgveda is described as horned. In the Rīgveda (X. 155.2) Brahmanaspati is addressed as 'sharp horned'. The word 'Sikhin' thus perhaps does not always mean 'having feather ((peacock's) on head'. The meaning of 'Sikhandin' is similarly a mysterious one. (It is interesting to note that in the Mahābhārata Pitāmaha Bhishma's death could only be caused by placing a 'Sikhandi in front of him. Pitāmaha was also the name of Brahṁā. What was the significance is not easy to explain). The Mahābhārata also refers to the Sakas, Tushāras, Kankas as 'Sringinoh' and they had no access to the sacrificial Mandapa (Sabha P. 51.-30).

Though the rātra cult was primarily associated with Brahṁā or a creator god, it, in course of time, had assumed various forms. Every religious sect of India placed its principal god to the position of the creator. But as each sect in its speculation about creation, referred it to things or gods of a particular number, that number became a favourite of that particular sect. The rātra cults thus assumed various forms, as has been mentioned before. Each of these forms may now be considered in detail.

The Dvādasarātra cult is not mentioned in any ancient text. But certain known facts of present day Hinduism which are otherwise inexplicable may be taken to point to its existence in India. The Aitareya Brahmana (IV. 4.25) refers to a Dvādasāha sacrifice of Prajāpati and also to the twelve 'tanus' of Prajāpati (Ait. Br. V. 25—see ante also). The Atharvaveda (IV.11) also refers to twelve nights being holy to Prajāpati. The numeral twelve is also found in 12 months and feeding of 12 Brahmins as necessary in Srāddha ceremony. It is significant that the Srimadbhagavatam, the holiest scripture of the Bhagvata cult, contains 12 Skandhas or books. The Manu Samhita has 12 chapters. There were also 12 Adityas. The Sudarsana or the Kālachakra of the Pañcharātra Samhitas had 12 spokes. The twelve 'Rāshis' in Hindu astrology might also point to such a cult. This numeral was also favoured by the

The Navarātra cult also is not definitely mentioned in any old text. As already said, its existence may be traced in the 'Navagvas' of the Vedic period. In the Rigveda (I. 7. 3) it is said that "Kshatriya Navagva" encouraged Indra in his fight. Four hymns in the Atharvaveda refer to the Navagvas (Ath. V. XIV. 1. 56; XVIII. 1. 58; 3.20; XX. 36. 2). In the last hymn it is said, "Our ancient sires, Navagvas, sages seven". If these ancient sages were Navagvas, they must be taken as the seven sages mentioned in the creation legends and who were the authors of the Pancharātra cult. Elsewhere (XVIII. 1.58) we find, "Our fathers are Angirasas, Navagvas, Atharvans and Bhrigus". It will be shown later on that the Saptarātra and the Pañcharātra cults were related to the Angirasas and Bhrigus. In a nuptial hymn (XIV. 1.56) Navagvas are said to accompany the bride and the bridegroom. Wilson takes the Navagvas as 'nine companions' only but in XVIII. 1, he says that the Navagvas were a mythical priestly race. The same hymn also invokes Yama. The association of the Navagvas with the nuptial hymn co-relates the Navagvas with the rātra cult of Brahma and even today Prajāpati Brahmā is the sacred god of the marriage ceremony. It has already been noted that there was a relation of Agni with the Navarātra sacrifice as mentioned in the Vedas (See above). Like the Dasarātra cult, the Navarātra is also related to the worship of female divinities. Durgā is called Navarātrikā and the whole puja is called the Navarātra. The puja really lasts for nine days and on the tenth the goddess is plunged in water.

The Rigveda contains faint traces to indicate that the Navarātra cult was primarily a non-Vedic cult much allied to the asura-Vidyā or the magical cult known as Madhuvidyā. "Indra, with the bones of Dadhyanch, slew ninety times nine Vritras {90×9=810}. Wishing for the horse's head, hidden in the mountain, he found it at Sharjanavat" (Rig. 1.13.11). The Nāsatyas are invoked as 'provided by you with the head of a horse, dadhyanch, the son of Atharvan, taught you the mystic science.' It should be noted that Dadhyanch was

known as a Navagva (Rig. IX 108. 4). These two hymns are based on certain legends of pre-Vedic period. One of them is that Indra killed the asuras with the Vajra made of Dadhichi's bones, as related in the Mahabharata. But Sayana refers to another tradition. Indra learnt the art of killing asuras from Dadhichi. The main instrument of this vidyā was a horse's head (having magic power). As this head was not with Dadhichi who was at that time in heaven, a search was made for it and it was found near Kurukhetra. Another story is that Dadhichi was prohibited by Indra from teaching the secret of pravrajyā or Madhuvidyā to anybody. But the Aswins pressed Dadhichi for its knowledge. The Aswins took off Dadhichi's head and replaced it by a horse's head. Later on Indra learnt it and struck off Dadhichi's horse head. But later on the Aswins restored the head of the sage. Whatever might be the real story, all point to Dadhichi, Indra and Aswins being aware of a science (Pravrajyā or Madhu vidyā) by which asuras could be killed. The Vajra of Indra was thus associated with a magic cult. The Vedic commentator in these hymns has taken recourse to several numerals which thus co-relate this magic cult with the rātra cults. The Vṛitras who were killed by this Vidyā were $9 \times 90 = 810$ in number. According to the Brihaddevata Dānavas were ninety nine in number and are of 97 groups of seven. This number has been computed by Sayana in this way. This Vidyā is practised in three worlds for three periods in each. This gives the number '9'. Each was exerted with '3' Saktis—thus the number rises to 27 (3×9). Each of these was modified by three gunas. So the number is '81' (27×3). Their exploit was extended to each of the 10 regions and thus the number comes to '810'. This explanation of the numerals, 3, 9, 27 etc. thus indicates that they were associated with a magical cult. Thus the rātra cult may be taken as a non-Vedic magic cult. Sayana's commentary further shows how numerals were explained with reference to religious matters even as late as the time of Sayana.

These legends inform us that in the Madhuvidyā and

āsurividyā the most essential requisite was a horse's head. The Pañcharātra cult is now known as 'Hayaśiṛṣa' (Horse's head) Pañcharātra. Thus the Pañcharātra cult is also related to Hayaśiṛṣa, the meaning of which, however, is a difficult thing to understand. From the Puranas and the Mahabharata we may get many explanations of the term.

(1) Vishnu or Narayana assumed the form of a horse (Mahabharata XII). From this it may be inferred that the Hayaśiṛṣa-Pañcharātra being a Vaisnava religion got its name from the horse incarnation (not otherwise known as an avatara) of Narayana. The Agni Purana also takes the words Hayasiśa and Hayagriva as names of Vishnu. But the difficulty in accepting this meaning lies in the fact that the Hayaśiṛṣa Pañcharātra cult did not deal with the worship of Vishnu alone—we have got a Hayasirsa pancharatra cult of the Sun and the Linga (see below and Schrader). So we may consider the second explanation.

(2) Surya also assumed the form of a horse and gave birth to the Nāsatyas according to the Puranas. The Rīgveda, as shown before, also associates the Aswins with the horse's Head. The Bṛihad Aranyaka Upanishad (2.5.16) also refers to the Hayaśiṛṣa cult of the Aswins.

(3) The Rīgveda associates 'horse's head' with a magical cult. Thus the Ratra cults may be equally associated with the worship of Vishnu, Indra, Aswins, Surya, Linga, as well as with a magical science.

The relations of Aswins with the Madhuvidyā and Brahṁā is known from the Atharvaveda hymn to Skambha Brahṁā (Muir's Sanskrit Texts vol V. p. 381-82 and f. note), wherein 'Madhukasā' is said to be the tongue of Skambha. In another hymn (Athar. IX. 1) Madhukasā as a goddess is said to have originated from six things—Divas, Prithivī, Antariksha, Samudra, Agni and Vāta; and she is the mother of the Adityas, daughter Vasus, life of creatures, centre of immortality and grand daughter of the Maruts. According to the Cchandogya Upanishad (III.1)

Madhuvidyā consists in the worship of Surya, Vasus, Rudras,

Adityas, Maruts, and Sādhyas. All these gods are related to the Rātra cults. 'Madhukasā' meaning also the whip of Aswins is said to have seven kinds of honey. The six sources of Madhukasā or the gods mentioned above and she herself thus come to 'seven' gods and here we find '7' kinds of honey. The whole hymn concludes with an invocation to Prajāpati, addressed as a bull. In Srāddha and 'Pindadāna' 'madhu' (honey) has a special importance. Even the mantras thereof have a nice hymn to 'madhu'. Like the six sources of Madhukasā, gifts of six things is essential in a Srāddha. Moreover Maruts and Vasus are especially adored in Srāddha. Thus Srāddha is correlated to the Hayaśirsha cult or the Madhuvidya.

(4) The second story related above has been echoed even in the Rīgveda (X 17.1 ff). "Tvashtṛin makes a wedding for his daughter. The mother of Yama (i.e. the bride) the wedded wife of Vivasvat disappeared. They created the immortal (bride) from mortals. Making (another) of like appearance, they gave her to Vivasvat. Saranyu bore the two Aswins, and when she had done so, she deserted the two twins." The Nirukta refers to the story in detail thus, "Saranyu, the daughter of Tvashtṛin bore twins to Vivasvat. She substituted for herself another female of similar appearance and fled in the form of a mare. Vivasvat also assumed the form of a horse and followed her. From their intercourse sprang up the Aswins, while Manu was the offspring of Savarnā (who was of the like appearance) (Sayana also cites the same story from the Bṛihaddevata in Rīg. VII. 7. 2.2)

These references in the Vedas thus relate the horse's head (Hayaśirsa) to Vivasvat and the Aswins. Saranyu's other children through Vivasvat (before she fled) were Yama and Yamī. Thus the Hayaśirsa cult becomes co-related to the cults of Sun, Aswins and Yama. Tvashtṛin of the story may be identified with the creator God (or Brahmā). The Hayaśirsa cult was thus related to the Brahma and Surya cults. It was perhaps converted into a Vaiṣṇava cult when Surya was later on identified with Viṣṇu. The Bhagavata Purana further

refers to Hayaśīrṣa being born in form of Dharma. So this cult also gave birth to a cult of Dharma which will be shown to be part and parcel of the Brahmā cult (See next chapter).

A story similar to that of the 'Horse's head' is found in the Buddhist Theragāthā (no. CLI). The Thera therein was called 'Migasira' (having the head of a deer) who practised skull-spell. The close association of the 'deer's head' with spells thus reminds us of the relation of the 'Horse's Head' with the magic cult of the Madhuvidyā and the Pañcharātra cult. Brahmā is known to have assumed the form of a deer and so did Dharma too (See chapter on Buddhism). Thus the rātra cults might have been really connected with some sort of magic in which Horse's head or 'deer's head' was the magic wand. The Navarātra cult may thus be regarded as being associated with the Navagvas and Dadhyanch and thus related to a form of magic cult or Madhuvidyā.

That a Navarātra cult like the Durga worship was allied to Sṛiṣṭitattva and Brahmā worship is apparent from the Markandeya Purana. Though the Purana may be a late one, several chapters and traditions about the creation legends etc. are undoubtedly very old. We cannot agree with Farquhar who believes that the Brahmā legends in this Purana is of a late period. The Navarātra cult as depicted in the Purana cannot be a later system, as is evident from the discussions about the Navarātra cult and its probable existence in the pre-Buddhistic periods. The Markandeya Purana (Ch. 47) refers to *nine* kinds of creation. It refers to *nine* sons of Brahmā (Ch. 50) whereas the Manu Samhita refers to ten Maharshins and other texts refer to seven Maharshins or sons of Brahmā. It refers to Nine Varshas and nine divisions of Bhāratavarsha and Bhārata itself is the ninth dvīpa. It further relates that there would be nine Manus, eight were already born and the ninth was the future Manu (ch. 94) (cf. 9 past Avatars of Vishnu and one future; 6 past Buddhas and one future). In a later chapter (ch. 100), however, it is said that there were 14 Manvantaras and 14 Manus. This chapter appears to be

a later version of the *Manus* etc. The original favourite number of the *Purana* was undoubtedly 'nine'. The *Devimāhātmya* begins from the 81st Chapter and is ascribed to the time of the 8th Manu, the ninth was yet to come. The number of the Chapter is also significant ($81=9 \times 9$). The meaning of 'Divā' and 'Rātra' as two kinds of gods also occurs in this *Purana*. Sādhyas, Vasus and Visvadevas are said to be the sons of Dharma (ch. 79). Brahmā is said to have created this Dharma and Rudra from his self's anger (ch. 50). That all these matters were related is evident from the fact that the *Purana* relates all matters beginning from creation legends upto the Manvantara, including the Chandi, in continuous chapters (47 to 100). Thus the Navarātra cult was closely related to the creation theory and the Brahmā cult.

The existence of a form of Navarātra cult may also be traced in Jainism. According to the Jains, their Sālākāpurushas include 9 Vasudevas, 9 Baladevas, 9 Naradas, and 9 Prativāsudevas. The number '9' was thus a favourite of the Jains (see chapter on Jainism.)

It is also likely that the Vasudeva cult was originally a Navarātra cult. There were 8 Vasus, the ninth was Vāsudeva (offspring of Vasu gods). When Krishna was called 'Vāsudeva', the cult became an 'ashtarātra' cult (Krishna being the eighth issue), but later on when Vasudeva worship and Vaishnavism were identified, it became a pañcharātra. It is also probable that worship of Navagraha was a navarātra cult. The worship of Adityas was a part of the Madhuvidyā as shown before. A Navarātra Vrata is performed even today and existed before the 17th century (Rājadharm Kaustubha of Anantadeva—p. 39).

The Mahabharata shows favouritism to the numeral '18'—18 parvans, 18 days' fight, 18 Akshauhini soldiers take part in the fight, the *Gita* has 18 chapters. Hopkins (*Great Epic of India* p. 371) thinks that this number was a later addition to the Mahabharata; but as shown before this was perhaps the favourite of the Vasudeva cult (9×2). When the Mahabharata became a scripture of the Vasudeva cult the number

THE CULT OF BRAHMA

'18 might thus have become the favourite numeral with the epic too. The Puranas, as they are found today, are mostly Vaishnava works and hence perhaps they have become 18 in number. The original Puranas might have been fewer in number (see O. Stein—"The numeral 18" in Poona Orientalist 1930 vol I, no. 3).

The probable existence of a Triratna cult may next be discussed. The name 'Triratna' as a cult is not found mentioned in any old text, except that 'Triratna' is the name of a sacrifice mentioned in the Vedas. But as we find various sects of India worshipping three gods or having a special liking for the numeral 'three,' it may be that such a sect really existed. It might have been the most orthodox or earliest cult of the worshippers of the ratras. The Pancharatna Samhitas attribute creation to three agents—Prakriti, Purusha and Kala. This and the triads in the Vedas, Puranas, and even in the Buddhist and Jain texts were the foundations of the Triratna cult. 'Three' and 'seven' were the most favoured numerals of the Vedic Indians. Agni is called Kshapavat (Rig 1. 12. 6) ('Lord of the night'). Wilson in his note to this hymn refers to the text "Agnei vai ratri". So Agni had some relation with ratri. Scholars are of opinion that as fire glows most brilliantly at night, so was Agni associated with ratri. But, as shown before, teja (or Agni) was one of the 'Tanus' of Brahma or ratri. The origin of the Vedic god 'Agni' might have thus been from the pre-Vedic worship of 'Agni' as a form (tanu) of Brahma. Agni was the chief god of some of the ancient Indians and was regarded by them as their creator god (Macdonell-Vedic Mythology pp. 93 ff). According to the Satapatha Brahmana (VII. 1. 2) Prajapati's vital air is Agni, air is his body, sky is his head, sun and moon are his eyes. In the same Brahmana (VI. 1. 2. 26) Prajapati is identified with Fire and Sun. Again Agni is represented as both the father and son of Prajapati. Brahmanaspati, one of the creator gods of the Veda, is also identified with Agni. Thus there was a time when Agni was regarded as the creator god. In fact the followers of the Pancharatna

cult identified the five Vyuhās with the five forms of Agni as known to the Vedas (see the 'Introduction' to the "Atri Samhita"—Venkateswar Oriental Series publication). A form of Agni-worship was perhaps related to the Tri-ratra cult. A hymn (Rig. 1. 8. 1) refers to three forms of Agni, three Devas kindling Agni and three functions of Agni (viz. giver of light, messenger of gods and the domestic guardian of mankind). Agni along with some other gods destroyed Vritra and forced earth, heaven and antariksha (i.e. three lokas). Agni is said to have announced Heaven to Manu (1. 7. 1) and he is the first Angirasa. Thus there was a Triratra form of Agni worship or of Agni as the creator God.

In the Atharva Veda (XVII. 4) there are clear references to the three Agnis. The hymn is a funeral one. "The Angirasa's pathway is the eastern Agni, the Aditya's pathway is the Garhapatya, the southward Agni is the way of Southerners (i. e. fathers). Thus Agni worship has been correlated here with the worship of the manes (fathers) with which, as said already, there was a close relation of the Brahma cult. The Atharvaveda further identifies Kama with Agni, Kama being a son of Sraddha. Kama, according to the Puranas was a grandson (daughter's son) of Brahma, son of Dharma through Lakshmi who was also identified with Sraddha. It has already been referred to above that the Rigvedic hymn to Ratri is followed by a hymn to Kala and Karma. This sequence was not accidental but points to the relations of both Kala and Karma with the ratri gods. The Atharvaveda thus shows the relation of Agni worship with that of Brahma, Karma etc., which were essential features of the ratra cult. In fact in the Rigveda also actually Agni is addressed as Brahma. Agni is associated with Prithivi in many Vedic funeral hymns and according to the Puranas, Prithivi was the source of Brahma. Thus various hymns indicate Agni's relations with Prajapati, or Brahma or other gods related to him.

In the hymns (Rig. 1.8.1 to 1.8.8) of Rīṣi Kaṇva we find that the sage invoked many gods together—Agni, Marut, Rudra, Prachetas, Brahmanaspati, a Devi Sunītā, Ilā (Manoḥ putri) and some others. All these gods and goddesses were closely associated with Brahmā (See next Chapter).

Another hymn of the Rigveda (III. 56) supposed to be an invocation to the Visvadevas appears to be an example of the Trirātra cult of Brahmā. Scholars have taken 'the one not moving away, supports six burthens' as referring to the year and six seasons. Ludgwig thinks that Tvashtṛi may be intended. Tvashtṛi being a creator god in the Veda, may be identified with Brahmā. So can the years and seasons be taken as forms of Brahmā, as they are done in the Brāhmanas. ("Prajāpati is the year"). The "One" here may therefore be taken as the 'Ṣkambha-Brahman' (Brahman or Brahmā as a pillar). Near it stands "three mighty ones"—which is explained by Sayana as Heaven, Firmament and the Earth, the three gods of the elements, as in the rātra cult. Then there is a reference to a 'Bull' explained as the god of the years (i.e. Kāla or Prajāpati himself). This 'Bull' is called "triple-breasted, three-uddered, with triple aspects". Then there are references to the 'goddess of the waters' and "holy ladies of the waters, three in number". These have 'thrice three habitations'. The Bull is called 'child of three mothers', or according to Sāyana 'the measurer of the three worlds, the Sun being meant here'. This 'three mothers' reminds of the three mothers of the Rātra cults (Mahālakṣmī, Mahāvidyā and Mahākālī). The 'three ladies of waters', is explained as 'Ilā, Saraswati and Bhārati', goddesses found later on in the family of Brahmā. The ladies appear 'thrice', 'three times a day'. Bhaga is then prayed to send 'triple wealth'. Savitri is invoked to pour abundance 'thrice'. In the last verse we find mention of "three bright realms," 'three heroes of the Asuras', and 'the gods thrice appearing from heaven.'

Savitṛi in this verse and in many others is also related to the numeral 'three'. In Rigveda (IV. 54) he is addressed as 'asura', is said to be thrice surrounding the midair, three regions, the triple spheres of life and, to 'have set the three heavens and the threefold earth in motion' and 'protecting us with triple law', "with triple bar against distress". Thus this god was also related to the Trirātra cult.

The Atharvaveda hymn to the sacred thread similarly refers to many "three" things. The amulet consists of 'three strings of gold; three of silver, three of iron'. It then refers to 'triple fullness', 'triple power of increase', 'three lives of Jama-dagni', 'thrice vital force of Kāsyapa', 'three sighs of immortality', 'three lives, 'three strong eagles'. The hymn says that when this amulet is worn, 'with immortality they drove off mṛityu'. This association of the numeral 'three' with the method of attaining immortality is found also in Buddhism (See chapter on Buddhism) and the Trirātra cult.

Soma pavamana is another vedic god related to the numeral 'three'. He is associated (Rig. IX. 86) with Trita; he pours food which yields power thrice a day. He made three-times seven pour out the milky flow. Soma spins 'triply twisted thread'. He is also associated with 'Seven milch cows' and the seven mothers.

Another god closely related with the Trirātra cult was the Aswins. References have already been made of the relation of the Nāsatyas with the numeral 'nine'. The invocations to Aswins often refer to the number 'three'. His chariot is 'three-sided, three pillared', and 'going on three journeys'. Thus we find that the Rigveda had a special liking for the numeral 'three'. The number of gods, as already said, also was based on this numeral,

were three conditions of Prajāpati or Paramātman—in one form he is Brahmā of yellow colour (like the inner part of the lotus), in another form he is Kāla of black colour (later on Dharma), in the third form he is Purusha Puṇḍarikāksha. Yogesvara is thus formless and also assumed a body. As he exists in three forms, he is called triguṇa. The worship of Brahman or Brahmā, thus included a formless god and also Brahmā with a form, the worship of Kāla and the three guṇas.

The same Purana further says that Paramātman was divided into four parts called "four Vyūhas" of Brahman. In the Isa Upanishad (verse 16) we find an indirect reference to Surya's Vyūhas which has been explained with reference to the rays of the sun. The Vyūha worship as said before, was the principal doctrine of the Pañcharātra cult. The Puranas and Upanishads associate the Vyūha with Brahmā and the Sun respectively and the Pañcharātra Samhitas with Vāsudeva. Bhandarkar was of opinion that the Vyūha cult was originally a cult of the Sun. Dr. J. N. Banerjee refers to the Brahmasutra (II. 2. 42) as the earliest work referring to the Vyūhas indirectly. Thus Bhandarkar's opinion about the origin of the Vyūha doctrine cannot be accepted, as the earliest reference to it has no connection with the Sun. All these references indicate that the Vyūha theory of the Pañcharātra cult was not a monopoly of this cult alone, but had most likely arisen out of a Vyūha of Brahmā or Brahman.

The Brahmandapurana further says that Brahman or Brahmā is Āditya, Kapila and Agni. The Trirātra cult was also thus related to the worship of the Sun and Agni. The association of Brahman or Brahmā with Kapila may further prove that the Trirātra cult of Brahmā was also related to the Sāṃkhya system (of Kapila). The Pañcharātra theory of Purusha, Prakṛti and Māyā (or Kāla) is really a form of the Trirātra philosophy.

The Yoga system also perhaps had a close relation with the Trirātra cult. The yoga system of Patanjali refers to three exercises. The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (II. 8-20) says that Dhyāna Yoga consists in holding one's body with its three erect parts (chest, neck and head) even. The Mohenjodaro figure of the

The various works mentioned therein are regarded as works of the Pañcharātra cult. It is quite likely that many of them might have been works of the Saptarātra cult or some of them were perhaps originally of the Saptarātra sect but later on converted into Pañcharātra works.

The Matsyapurana (Ch. 20) reference is very interesting from various points of view. According to it, there was a fish named Kaushika in Kurukshetra who had seven sons who were the disciples of Garga. These sons in their later births (5 or 7?) remembered their previous births. One of them was born as king Brahmadatta of Panchala and later on stayed near Hari and practised something. The text here mentions that he practised 'saptarātram' which may mean 'for seven nights' or the 'cult of Saptarātra'—for, by what he practised the king got a supernatural power. This leads me to think that the king probably practised some Saptarātra rites which gave him that power. It will be shown below that whatever we may know of the Saptarātra cult from other references will point to this cult being closely associated with a king named Brahma datta and the theory of rebirth, not in the exact Hindu form, but of a peculiar nature, more allied to the story mentioned above than to other ancient Hindu legends or doctrines. In fact, many scholars notice the existence of Janmāntaravāda in the Indus culture. The Matsyapurana, in this story as well as in the next few chapters, deals with the benefit of Pindadāna and Srāddha, and this suggests the connection of the legend with a rātra cult. The Numeral 'seven' had also a special association with this story. Later references especially in the Mahabharata, will further confirm our suspicion (See details of the story in the Appendix).

The Rigveda contains references to various groups of 'Seven'. Agni had not only three forms, but even seven. The Rigveda invokes the god along with six other gods or rishis—Turvasas Yadu, Ugradeva, Navavastva, Bṛihadratha and Turviti. These along with Agni form a group of seven. (1. 8. 1). In another hymn (Rig. 1. 22. 8) we may trace the Vedanta

doctrine of the unity of Brahman and the universe. The hymn further refers to several 'numerals', to Kāla and his wheels. Visvadeva is said to have seven sons. Āditya is said to have seven horses, seven-wheeled chariot, and seven sisters rode on it. In it are deposited seven forms of utterances. Seven threads envelope the Sun. In another hymn (1. 11. 5) Indra is said to be gratified by seven rishis. In many of the Rigvedic hymns we find seven gods being invoked together—of which Mitra, Varuna, Aditi, Ocean, Earth, Heaven and Agni form a close group. In Rigveda (X. 72) Aditi is said to have produced 8 sons, but one of them was cast away and only 7 of them were accepted by the gods (See ante). In the Rigveda (X. 5) Agni is associated with 'Seven sisters', perhaps the seven tongues or flames, Kāli, Karālī etc. as known also in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad. The hymn on the Kesins (X. 136) refers to the Munis, and most curiously, the hymn has 7 stanzas and each stanza is said to have for its rishi one of the seven sons of Vātaraśana. The Munis, as will be shown later on, were not purely sacrificers and their association with the number '7' is significant. Further the hymn (Rig. X. 5) "seven are the pathways which the wise (fathers) have fashioned" is significant, for the 'seven ways of the fathers', reminds us of the association of the Saptarātra cult with ancestor worship.

According to the Yajurveda, Agni had 7 forms, 7 fuel logs, 7 tongues, 7 rishis, 7 mansions. He is worshipped in seven-fold manner by 7 priests. The hymn also addressed Agni as 'Visvakarmā', a Vedic creator god, and equivalent to Brahmā. According to the Satapatha Brahmana, Puruṣas were seven and these seven becoming one was known as prajāpati (VI. 1. 1. 1. ff.). Thus the figure seven was always associated with a form of the creator god.

The Vṛātya hymns of the Atharvaveda (Book X) contain clear references to the association of the Vṛātyas with the numeral '7' and thus the Vṛātyas were perhaps followers of the Saptarātra cult. It is said that, "Of that Vṛātya, there are 7 vital airs, 7 downward breath and 7 defused breath". These upward

breaths or airs were Agni, Aditya, Soma, Pavamāna, waters, domestic animals and creatures. The downward breaths are—the fullmoon, eighth day after the full-moon (Ashtakā), new moon, faith, dikshā, sacrifice and sacrificial fers. The defused airs are—earth, antariksha, heaven, constellations, seasons, season groups and years. Of these possessions of the Vrātya, we find that Ashtakā is associated with the Srāddha cult and it is notable that the above-mentioned chapter in the Matsya purana (containing the legend of Kausika) is followed by the story of Yayāti and Ashtakā. The defused airs of the Vrātya include some calculation of seasons and years and it has been already shown that seasons and years are associated with Brahmā or Prajapati ("Prajāpati is the year"). The multiplication of the number of years to an absurdity, as noted before, was a special doctrine associated with Brahmā, and the Puranas, Jains and Buddhists closely followed this system. Years and seasons were adored in the Srāddha ceremony.

In an invocation to Brahman (Atharvaveda XIX. 43), seven gods are invoked to help the Rishi to attain Brahman. They are Agni, Vāyu, Soma, Surya, Chandra, Indra, and the waters. Here also we find a group of seven gods being worshipped for attaining Brahman. Some of these gods are included in the list of the seven vital airs of the Vrātya. So were the seven tattvas viz. Mahat, Ahaṅkāra, Ākāśa, Jala, Agni, Vāyu and Pṛithivī the main principles of creation according to the philosophers. The Pañcharātra Samhitas refer to Mahat as Brahman and Ahaṅkāra as Brahmā. According to the Mahabharata (XII. 182) "Brahmā who came out of lotus was Ahaṅkāra." Brahmā's body was made up of the Panchabhūtas. The Markandeya Purana (Ch. 45 and 59, 60) ascribes creation to seven matters and the primeval Anḍa is said to have been surrounded by seven covers. So we find how the Vedic gods had their parallels among the followers of the Saptārātra system and the philosophers.

The Atharvaveda (XV. 111. 4) also refers to seven oblations for Pitṛins. According to the Mahabharata (Sabhā Parva),

there are seven groups of Pitṛins. Thus the numeral seven was also related to ancestor worship (cf. Rig. X. 5). The Atharva Veda also refers to God Kāla having a horse with 7 reins, chariot with seven rolling wheels and 7 naves. Kāla was the father of Prajāpati. Thus was Kāla related to the Saptarātra cult.

The Upanishads also show acquaintance with the sacred character of the numeral '7'. The Mundaka Upanishad refers to '7' tongues of fire, 7 Prāṇas, 7 flames, 7 Homas and 7 Lokas. The Brihadaranyaka Up. (2. 5-36) refers to 7 gods and a Hayaśirṣa cult of the Aswins. The seven tongues of fire, referred to in the Vedas, though not named, are Kālī, Karālī, Manojā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravarṇī, Sphulinginī and Visvaruchī. In these names we have the earliest reference to the tāntric goddesses. The Saptarātra cult, like the Navarātra as shown before, might also have a Tāntric form and included worship of the Śakti. It might be the system as depicted in the Chandi which is called the 'Saptasatī'. The 'Māyā' or Mahāmāyā already shown to have some relation with the Pañcharātra cult had also some affinity with the Saptarātra system.

The Chhāndogya Upanishad (2. 9. 1 ff) refers to 'Saptavidham Sāman'. This seven Sāman were worshipped in the form of Surya's various aspects. Pupins are said to be followers of 'Āditya Sāman', and in this connection there is a reference to the Śrāddha ceremony. Another form of seven Sāman is called 'atimṛityu' (2.10). Similarly the same Upanishad also refers to (2. 1) Panchavidham Sāman - referring to the worship of Prithivī, Agni, Antariksha, Āditya and Dyaus. Such Sāman are again divided into seven 'Druhī'. In chapter 5th, there is a reference to 5 Questions. The answers refer to the Panchagni Vidyā of 5 kinds. Again it here identified with Dyaus, Parjanya, Prithivī, Puruṣa and woman. These philosophical references are mysterious but undoubtedly show how philosophy was interrelated with the groups of 7 gods or things, or with the groups of '5'. The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad also refers to the group of '5' mentioned above i.e. Dyaus, Parjanya etc. (Bri. Ar. Up. 6. 2. 9 ff).

has been called the Pañcharātra in the epic was originally the 'Saptarātra' of Brahminā, and how this latter one was given a pañcharātra garb will be clear from the following considerations.

The Santiparva very seldom refers to Vishnu, Vāsudeva or Krishna as objects of worship. The Principal God is Narayana or Brahmanyadeva or Hari. Even where Vishnu is mentioned, it is not difficult to show it to be an interpolation or result of careless re-editing of the chapters. The whole Parva mostly deals with the worship of Brahman or of Brahmā. Hence there are so much of philosophical speculations and early legends related to creation. The result of virtue is always said to be Brahmaloaka. Nowhere do we find any reference to the Vishnuloka.

In the chapter on Avatara, the first Avatāra is called Hamsa and in the list of the Vyūhas, Brahmā is regarded as the last one. Hamsa is definitely associated with Brahmā. Balarama or Krishna is not mentioned as an Avatāra. His place is given to Sātvata, perhaps the founder of the Sātvata religion, allied to, but not same as, the Pancharātra cult (See below). The Avatāras are described as that of Hari or Narayana. The word 'Narayana' is now-a-days regarded as a name of Vishnu. But Narayana was originally a god of water, equivalent to Brahmā or the Purusha of the Veda, the first creator God. The Manusamhita clearly says that Narayana was Brahmā. Muir took notice of it in his Sanskrit texts (Vol. IV. p. 31). This is supported by the Mahabharata (in chapters on creation), Brahmanda Purana (Ch. VII) and even the Vaishnāva Vishnu Purana (1.4.1). The last work refers to "Divine Brahmā called Nārāyana". The Markandeya Purana (Ch. 47, 5) derives the word Nārāyana from 'Nāra' (or 'waters') which was tanu "of 'Brahmasvarūpinam Devam'". This reminds us of the "tanu" of Brahma, in which 'water' was included (See above—meaning of rātra). Thus there is ample and early evidence to show that Narayana, at a certain time was equivalent to the creator god—Brahmā. Narayana's early in-

carnations were thus originally incarnations of Brahmā. Even the word "Hari", taken generally as equivalent to Narayana, thus referred originally to Brahmā.

Narayana was, however, a mysterious god. In the Satapatha Brahmana and even in the Mahabharata, Narayana was described as a 'Rishi' (so was Brahmā a priest in the Vedas) son of Dharma. The cult of 'Dharma' as will be shown later on, was more allied to that of Brahmā. Dr. Raychaudhuri has also shown ("Early history of Vaishnavism") how Narayana was accepted as Vishnu by a gradual process. In the Satapatha Brahmana, Narayana, the son of Dharma, did not offer sacrifices. Narayana was thus a follower of the Dharma cult, not allied to the Vedic religion. In the Mahabharata too, Narayana is said to have performed Tapasyā, along with Nara. In the Bhagavata Purana, Narayana is described as one of the avatars of Vishnu, whereas the chief creator was 'Purusha'. (Creation Legends in Book I). In the Taittiriya Aranyaka, Narayana has been regarded as a god. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Narayana having created the world after performing the Pañcharātra. Thus the Narayana cult was originally a non-vedic cult, and he was accepted as a god only after he had accepted the cult of Vedic sacrifices. The Pañcharātra cult is said in the epic to have been related by Narayana. The cult is further distinguished from the Vedic and Aranyakas. Thus the Pañcharātra cult in the Mahabharata was not originally a Vaishnava cult. It was allied to the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā. The epic thus preserves the older traditions of Brahmā mixed up with the attempts to reconcile the non-Vedic doctrine with the Vedic ones.

The Mahabharata in describing the origin of the so-called Pañcharātra cult really shows that it was describing the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā. The originators of the cult were Seven Rishis. The names of these rishis are not the same in all places of the epic. In one list, Svayambhuva Manu is related as one of the authors. This cult of Manu is related to that of Brahmā. In any case, the number of the authors was 'seven'. Their title

was 'Chitrasikhandins' a term already shown to have a mysterious non-Vedic meaning. In another place in the epic, the founder of the Pañcharātra cult is called the sage 'Pañchasikha'. It is quite likely that this latter sage was the author of the real Pañcharātra Vaisnava cult, whereas the Seven Chitrasikhandins were the founders of the Saptarātra cult.

The 'seven' above-mentioned rishis are called 'Saptaprakṛitayaḥ'. The teachings of these sages were Saṁyama (self-control), Satya (truth), Śreyas (real good), Brahma, hita (welfare), Dharma, artha and moksha. These eight doctrines may well be compared with the 'Ashtāṅgika mārga' of the Buddha. In the epic (Śānti. Ch. 335) the religion of these rishis is said to have been at first 'not authoritative' but Nara-yana says that "it was made authoritative by me through the grace of Brahmā." This shows the religion of the Chitrasikhandins to have been associated with the Brahmā cult. Before it was so, it was not accepted by people as an orthodox cult.

The same chapter (335) then refers to the fact 'that the fathers of the Lokas (Lokapitaraḥ) introduced this Sanātana dharma for the benefit of man. The 'Pitaraḥ' adopted it from Pitāmaha Brahmā. These fathers were the seven rishis or Prajāpatis (who were also seven, according to the Puranas). The religion is called 'Dharmayoni' i.e. originating from 'Dharma'. The seven rishis taught it to Angirasa and then to Bṛihaspati. The seven rishis then disappeared. This appears to be an echo of the fact that 'after creation Brahmā died'. The meaning appears to be that after the doctrine was accepted by Bṛihaspati who was an orthodox sage, the cult of the 'Seven Rishis (or Brahmā), as original authors, disappeared and a new form was assumed by the cult.

From Bṛihaspati the religion was learnt by Uparichara Vasu. This 'Vasu' is a mysterious figure in Hindu legends. In one place in the Mahabharata, he is described as following the Ahimsā doctrine. He is further described as a devotee of Hari, worshipper of Vishnu, according to the Pañcharātra cult which emanated from Surya, and of the Pītṛins and so on

(Ch. 335). In the next chapter (336), he is however, said to have performed an Asvamedha sacrifice, in which the chief priest Bṛihaspati could not see Narayana or 'Purātana Deva' when he had come to accept the oblations. But Uparichara saw him. In the next chapter (337) Vasu is said to have decided a quarrel among the Devas and Rishis, regarding whether animals should be killed in sacrifices or not. The king decided by favouring the contention of the gods that animals should be sacrificed. The Rishis therefore cursed the king by sending him to the earth and closed the heaven for him. But the devas gave him the boon that even while living under the earth, Vasu would get as his food "the Vasudhārā" given by people during a sacrifice and that Vasu would go to Brahmāloka. Vasu then attained Brahmāloka by worshipping Narayana (or Hari). The whole legend clearly reflects a struggle between the 'sacrifice' cult of the Devas and the Ahimsā cult of the 'Rishis'. The epic tried to transform the legend into a Vaisnava one by identifying Narayana with Vishnu when it is said that the king went to Brahmāloka (not Vishnuloka) but flew there on the back of Garuḍa. The legend thus indicates that Vasu had some intimate relation with 'earth' (Earth goddess), 'Vasudhārā' and some heterodox cult; but the epic tries to transform it to an orthodox cult, especially of Vishnu. It should be remembered that 'Vasu' worship existed in the Vedas, and forms even a part of modern Śrāddha ceremonies. As ancestor worship is related to the cult of Earth goddess, as indicated before, this legend indicates the relation of the rātra cult with 'Vasu', Vasudhārā and Śrāddha cults.

The story of Uparichara being taken to heaven by Garuḍa has been compared to the Babylonian story of Etana going to the highest heaven on the back of an eagle (Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress 1947). Etana went there to find out the plant of birth. The eagle was taking him to Ishtar, the mother goddess, but Etana fell down along with the Eagle. Besides the main facts (viz. Vasu's or Etana's flight for heaven and fall of both on earth), there is some similarity between

these two stories. The 'Vasudhārā' mentioned in the Indian legend is inseparably connected with a form of *Srāddha* (known as *Nāndimukha*, or *Ābhyudayika Srāddha*) performed for the increase of one's dynasty and long life of children and so on. Etana is also said to have gone to 'mother Earth' (equivalent to *Vasudhārā*) for 'the plant of birth.'

It is in connection with the story of *Uparichara* that a legend is related of the *tapasyā* of *Ekata*, *Dvita*, *Trita* and *Narada* for seeing *Narayana* who was residing in the *Sveta-dvīpa*. The people of the *Dvīpa* were worshipping *Narayana*. It is in this story that the origin of the *Bhagavata* religion is traced by Scholars. But a careful perusal of the chapters will indicate that originally these chapters referred to a *Brahmā* cult. The epic in its present form has converted it into a story of the *Bhāgavata Pañcharātra* religion.

The sages *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita* are said to have been the members (*Sadasya*) of the *Uparicara's* sacrifice and are called 'mānasa putra' of *Brahmā*. *Dvita* along with *Trita* is known to the *Rigveda* as great rivals of gods. (*Rig. VIII. 47*). All these indicate that these sages and the king *Uparicara* must have had relation with the *Brahmā* cult. The people of the *Svetadvīpa* are called 'Ekāntins'. Though 'Ekāntins' are identified in *Pañcharātra* works with the *Pañcharātrins*, the epic really describes them as worshippers of *Brahman* or *Brahmā*. (See below). The sages *Ekata*, *Trita*, *Narada* etc. performed *tapasyā* for seven years. The people therein are described as 'Brahmajapatah', 'Brahmabhāvānuṣṭhitaḥ'. Nowhere in these legends *Narayana* is said to be identical with *Vishnu*, except the fact of *Uparicara* going to 'Brahmaloka' on the back of *Garuda*, which appears to be a careless attempt of the *Vaiṣṇavas* to convert the legend into a *Vaiṣṇava* one.

After *Narada's* visit to *Narayana*, he is said to have uttered a prayer to the god (*Ch. 338*). The prayer in its early part does not show any indication of the god being *Vishnu*. He says, 'Viśvāya nirguṇāya guṇātmane'. The prayer ends with a reference to 'Brahmanyadeva'. The features of *Narayana*

described in the epic do not appear to be those of Vishnu, but are more akin to those of Brahmā or the Vedic Purusha (Mabh. Ch. 339). Narayana approached Nārada with Vēdi, Kamaṇḍalu, maṇi, Kuṣa, upānaha, ājina, dandakāshṭha and burning Agni in his hand. None of these accompaniments are generally associated with Vishnu, whereas Vēdi, Kamaṇḍalu, Kuṣa etc. are closely connected with Brahmā. Narayana of these chapters never originally meant Vishnu.

Narayana then promises to Narada that he will be born in the family of Dharma. This co-relates the legend with that of the Narayana Rishi being born as the son of Dharma, as related in the Satapatha Brahmana. Narayana is addressed by Narada as 'Bhagwan Viśvadṛik Siṃha'. This epithet of Narayana appears to be related to the fact that Narayana is also called Hari, and one of the avatāras of Narayana was the Nara-Hari (man Lion) form. It will be shown later on that this idea of a lion having eyes on all quarters might have some relation with Brahmā's four heads and depiction of Brahmā as four lions joined together as found on the pillars of Asoka (See Chapter on Buddhist Art), and of Brahman in the Upanishad as a lion.

The following chapters in the Mahabharata (chap 340 to 348) also indicate that they dealt with a Brahmā cult or the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā. Narayana is said to have assumed the form of Hayagrīva (Ch. 340 and 347) and appeared before Brahmā in that form. The Hayasirśa cult, as shown before, was also associated with the asuravidyā in the Vedas, and with Aswins and the Sun god. Narayana's Hayagrīva form is thus a result of an attempt to identify Narayana (originally a non-Vedic deity) with the Vedic gods, and the cult of Narayana with the Pañcharātra cult.

The Mahabharata (Ch. 342) deals in details with the genealogy of Brahmā's sons and daughter's almost as in the Puranas. In another chapter (XII. 59) it is said that "Lotus arose from the forehead of Vishnu. From that lotus arose Sṛī, wife of Dharma". In chapter 342 we find a quarrel between Rudra and Narayana (as Vishnu) which was settled by Brahmā. The same

chapter refers to the Seven births of king Brahmādatta, which in the Matsyapurana has been associated with the Pañcharātra cult by converting the '7' births into 'five'. According to the Buddhists, too, men have seven births before Nirvana (see details in Chapter on Buddhism). These chapters in the Mahabharata are thus really describing the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā related to Dharma and Sṛi. (See 'Brahmā worship').

According to the Brabmānda Purana, Brahmā had four Mānasa sons—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanatkumara who became Sambuddhas. The Mahabharata also refers to them and contains a chapter on the Buddha and Sambuddhas, thus indicating the existence of an early form of Buddhism related to the Brahmā cult.

The epic also co-relates the Pindadāna cult with the cult of Brahmā (Ch. 345). It is said that Pinda was created by Vishnu in his Varāha form in which he dug out the Pindas from the earth. The names of the Pindas were Pitā, Pitāmaha, and Prapitāmaha. It will be shown later on that the Varaha-avatāra was originally an incarnation of Brahmā and later on ascribed to Vishnu. Brahmā according to the epic was the lord of sacrifices, and hence we may assume him to be lord, as such, also of Pindadāna. The Pauranic legends about Gayāsura also associate Pindadāna with a cult of Brahmā and Dharma, and then with Vishnu. Gaya was known as a Brahmasthāna and the epic does not refer to the Vishnupāda at Gaya, but to the god Dharma of Gaya (Mabb. Vanaparva).

The Mahabharata while referring to the Ekānta Dharma (Cb. 348) indicates how this religion was converted by it into a Vaiṣṇava cult. It is said that the Ekānta Dharma was a doctrine approved by the Samaveda and preserved by Vishnu. But at the same time it is said that it was declared by Brahmā in various ways in his seven different births. Brahmā, like Brahmādatta, is thus said to have seven births—a doctrine related to the Saptarātra cult. The epic, however, ascribes all the births of Brahmā (as in some Puranas) to different limbs of Vishnu, which is not supported by the Manu Samhitā, several Puranas

and the name of Brahmā 'Svayambhū.' This theory of the rise of Brahmā from Vishnu's limbs was thus an attempt of the Vaiṣṇavites to prove the superiority of the Vishnu cult and to suppress the cult of Brahmā. The Ekānta Dharma was thus definitely a religion more allied to the Brahmā cult, as already said before.

The "*seven births*" of Brahmā is an interesting study and throws much light on the traditional history of the growth of Indian religious systems. In his first birth, Brahmā arose from the mouth of Vishnu and taught Dharma to the Phenapa Ṛishis who taught it to Vaikhānasa. The Rīgveda refers to the Vaikhānasas, and the Vaikhānasa religion is also known as a form of Pancharātra cult. This form of Pancharātra cult was therefore allied to the cult of Brahmā and was older than the Vedic religion (also see below).

In his second birth, Brahmā arose from the eyes of Vishnu and taught it to Rudra. Thus was the Rudra cult mixed up with that of Brahmā. In his third birth, Brahmā arose from the words of Narayana and preached the 'Trisauparṇa' religion, as related in the Rīgveda. Vāyu learnt it from Suparṇa.

It was in his fourth birth from the ears of Vishnu, that Brahmā preached the Sanātana Dharma as found in the Vedas and Aranyakas. This was then taught to Manu. This tradition of the Vedic religion arising after the above mentioned three religions may be taken as a genuine tradition of the evolution of Indian religions. The Vedic religion was thus the fourth religion of India.

The epic then refers to the fifth birth of Brahmā from the nose of Vishnu and teaching of Dharma to Virana. Similarly in the sixth birth Brahmā arose from the egg and taught religion to Varhishad. The last birth of Brahmā was from the navel of Vishnu. Brahmā taught Dharma to Daksha who taught it to Aditya. These last two births are generally mentioned in the Puranas. The Mahabharata, however, indicates that Brahmā was the earliest god of India and all religions came out of his cult.

The epic version of the Vedic religion being the fourth religion of India is perhaps echoed in the Rīgveda (VIII. 90. 14) in which it is said, "Past and gone are three mortal generations. The fourth and last into the Sun hath entered." This fourth generation was the generation of the Vedic religion (Also see Griffith's note on the hymn and the Satapatha Brahmana II. 5. 1. 1. 4).

The epic further says that the Ekānta religion is followed only by the Sanyasins and the Sātvas. This religion mixed with good deeds (Sukarma) and non-killing (Ahimsā) pleases Narayana. This religion thus reminds us of two most important doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism. This religion, it is further said, is followed only by the Pratibuddhas and not by Brahmanas. Those who cannot follow this religion attain mukti by following Samkhya, Aranyaka, Veda and Pañcharātra. This epic tradition thus differentiates the Ekānta religion not only from the Samkhya, Aranyaka and Veda but also Pañcharātra. The Ekānta religion therefore was not originally a Pañcharātra doctrine as the later Pañcharātra texts assert.

The epic concludes by saying that Narayana himself taught the Pañcharātra and all religions teach that Narayana is the 'Parama Puruṣa'. The epic thus assimilates the Brahmā cult or the Saptarātra cult and gives a Vaiṣṇava colouring.

In describing the creation, the epic refers to 7 tattvas, besides Manas. Brahmā was Ahankāra and his body was made up of five elements (XII. 182). In another chapter (XII. 233), it is said that at the time of Pralaya, Surya and Agni got 7 Sikkhās. Concentration or Dhāraṇā include 7 objects—Pṛithivī, Vāyu, Jāla, Teja, Ahankāra and Buddhi. The Mahābharata thus shows favour to the numeral 'Seven' and deals with the Brahmā cult, but in its present form was converted into a Vaiṣṇava religious text.

The Narayani Section clearly illustrates how an attempt was made to suppress the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā by the Pañcharātra cult of the Vaiṣṇavas. Similarly the Gītā may also be shown to have been originally a work of the Saptarātra

school. The Gita according to most authorities, is said to have contained 700 Slokas, but the Mahabharata and several other authorities mention 745 Slokas in it. If the Gita be proved to have really 700 slokas we may correlate it with the Saptaratra cult. In a meeting of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta Sri Chapla Kanta Bhattacharya raised the point (*Anandabazar Patrika*, 31 July 1949). He referred to the Mahabharata itself referring to the existence of 745 Slokas in the Gita, whereas the popular tradition, the commentator Sridhara and Samkara-charya described the number of Slokas to be 700. According to Sri Chaitanya, and the Persian and Arabic translation of the Gita, it contains more than 700 or 745 Slokas. In this connection Sri Bhattacharya referred to the Kathiawad Gondal publication of the Gita based on a manuscript from Banaras. In this edition, though the number of Slokas is 745, the chapter on 'Visvarupadarsana' contains at the end a passage in which Arjuna requests Sri Krishna to assume his normal form of having two hands (*bhujadvayena*) instead of 'having four hands' as found in other editions. The Visvarupa Chapter thus undoubtedly shows later tampering. The full details of Bhattacharya's paper are not known to me, but it may be shown that this chapter was originally associated with the Brahma cult and the later interpolations had increased the number of verses from 700 to 745.

The 'Visvarupa' which Sri Krishna showed to Arjuna cannot have anything to do with any form of Vishnu. The 'Visvarupa' is similar to the form of Vedic Purusha, a form of Brahma. In the very first Sloka (XI, 15) in the prayer of Arjuna, Arjuna says that he saw Brahma in Krishna's body. Being asked by Arjuna (Sloka 31), Krishna says, "I am Kala, the destroyer of Loka". Further (verse 39) Arjuna identifies Krishna as gods Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Sasanka, Prajapati and Prapitamaha, but not Vishnu. The words 'Brahmanamisam Kamalasanastham' may mean 'Brahma, Vishnu and Siva' or the latter two words may be an epithet of Brahma who was both 'Isa' and 'Kamalāsana'.

The verses which refer to 'Vishnu' may be shown to be interpolations. In verses 17 and 46, the god Visvarupa is said to have Gada and Chakra in his hands. If the verse 46 really contains the word 'Chaturbhuja', it cannot be explained why only two implements of two hands are mentioned and not four. Further the Visvarupa having thousands of arms, it is not clear why only two implements are mentioned in these verses, whereas the verse 10 refers to innumerable 'Ayudhas'. 'Gada' and 'Chakra' in these verses were additions to identify the god with Vishnu. Thus both these two verses appear to be interpolations.

Similarly in verse 24, Visvarupa is addressed as 'Vishnu' (of verse 30 also). Now, the verses 23 to 25 describe Arjuna as being afraid to see the terrible form of the god; but the following verses show Arjuna as still describing the form and taking great interest in the 'Visvarupa'. Arjuna continues the prayer till verse 44. It was after that, in verses 45 and 46 that Arjuna is again expressing his fear and requesting Krishna to assume his human form. Verses 24 and 25 have therefore no significance. Moreover, verses 23 and 24 practically repeat the earlier verses. Compare verse 16 with no. 23. The eyes are again described in verse 24. It is difficult to believe that the great writer of the chapter would uselessly repeat things in this manner. Thus verses 23 to 25 appear to be interpolations. Similarly verse 30 may be a later addition, for Vishnu was not a prominent god in the Gita as is apparent from some other verses (21. ch. X) in which Vishnu is still regarded as one of the Adityas.

Verses 48 and 53 also are repetitions of one another. It is in these verses that Veda, Yajna and even Tapas and Dana are declared to be of no effect to a man desiring to see the Visvarupa. Such a declaration against the Vedic religion and unnecessary repetitions raise suspicion about the authenticity of these verses. Moreover Sankaracharya being born earlier than Sri Chaitanya and others, we may accept his statement about the Gita having really 700 Slokas. Even the Bhishmaparva

enumeration of the number of Slokas might really have been an interpolation.

The Gita thus consisting of 700 Slokas was originally a work of the Brahma cult, Visvarupa being a form of Brahma and Kala. The inclusion of the Gita in the Bhishmaparva (the chapter on Bhishma or Pitamaha, equivalent to Brahma) and its sanctity in Sraddha ceremony may also point to its being associated with the Brahma cult.

The Markandeya Purana also refers to Seven Visesas and seven matters being united to lead to creation (cf. the Vaisesika system of Philosophy). Seven Prakritis are said to have covered the primeval egg from which sprang Brahma called Purusha. The Manu Samhita also attributes creation to seven elements Mahat, Abamkara and the five Tanmatras (Manu 1. 19). The explanation of the word 'sarira' (Manu 1. 17) perhaps indirectly refers to these tattvas as being known as Brahma's tanu, as mentioned in the Puranic explanation of the word 'Ratri'.

Brahma's relations with the numeral seven is also known from the iconography of Brahma. According to the Vishnu Dharmottara, Brahma's image was to be seated on a chariot driven by seven swans. Even in the Arthashastra (ch. 172), 'Yoga, or secret magical contrivances is said to have been preceded by performances of sacrifices for 7 nights. Thus magical rites which were related to the Ratra cults had also some relation with the number '7'. In this connection the following passage may be of great interest. The standard texts for the purposes of life (Purushartha) are in order—Manu for Dharmashastra (which is said to have been originally of 700 verses), Devi mahatmya for Artha, Vatsyayana for kama (which also is said to have been at first 700 sutras) and the Bhagvadgita for Moksha (which is also 700). Whether there is significance in the number 700, or not is not quite material for our consideration here". (T. V. Kapali Sastri—'Thoughts on Tantra' in Sri Aurobinda Mandir Annual Jayanti No. 7, 15th August, 1948, p. 98). Though the writer here did not care to think of the number '700', we may

understand its significance when we find that the number '7' was a very popular one in India and the Saptaratra cult of Brahma was once a popular form of religion in India. The cult of Brahma has disappeared but its influence existed for a long time till the rise of Buddhism.

The Puranas also appear to have been at first texts of the Saptaratra cult of Brahma, till Vaisnava influence converted them into Pancharatra texts. The Agni Purana refers to it but no detail of it has been put down. The numeral favoured in the early Puranas, as Hopkins says, was 'seven'. The contents of subject matters in a Purana are described as—creation legends, Manvata and Kalpas, dynasties of Rishis and kings—things which are related to the Brahma cult. The Puranas are said to be the first declaration of Brahma and there was at first only one Purana (Matsya Purana 53. 3). In later ages the number of the Puranas increased, and different sects began to write Puranas of their own sects and the older Puranas were re-written mostly as works on Vaishnavism. The old contents are found in almost all of them but later additions have altogether changed their character which thus led the scholars to regard the Puranas as production of a very late age. It may thus be shown that the Saptaratra cult of Brahma was at one time the most popular religion of India. It will be shown in next chapters how Buddhism and Jainism also may be shown to have sprung from the Saptaratra cult of Brahma.

The Pancharatra cult was also originally a non-Vedic cult based on the numeral '5'. When it was accepted by the worshippers of Agni, they made it a cult of five Agnis; the Vedic worshippers began to worship a group of five gods and the philosophers made a discourse on the five elements; the Sun worshippers had also a Pancharatra cult and finally the Vasudeva sect made it consist of the worship of Vasudeva and his four Vyuhas. Originally the Pancharatra cult was also associated with Brahma, for Brahma's body was made up of Panchabhuta (Mahabh. XII, 182). These were the body or limbs (tanu or ratri) of Brahma. According to the Satapatha Brahmana

(VII. 1. 2. 7) Prajapati's body consisted of the world, air, sky, wind, sun and moon. It also mentions five parts of his body (VI. 12. 17). The Agni Purana, as already stated, refers to Heaven, air, fire, water and earth as the five Rātras. Thus all authorities opine that five or seven elements were the limbs of Brhmma. Like the other Rātrā cults, the Pancharatra was originally related to Brahma. The worship of Brahma led to the worship of these elements, either as elements or as gods of these elements. The Samkhya Philosophers began to philosophise on these elements out of which Brahma's creation arose. Other sects had also their Pancharatra doctrines.

The five forms of Agni known to the Vedas were Garhapatya, Ahavaniya, Dakshina, Anvaharya, and Sabhya. A hymn to Agni (Rig 1. 15. 12) refers to Trita's worship of the "five shedders of benefits" i.e. five gods. They were probably Indra, Varuna, Agni, Aryaman and Savitri, or the gods of five elements—fire, wind, sun, moon and lightening or nakshatras. The Panchajanya or the five tribes and the 'five rivers' also point to a Pancharatra cult.

The Aitareya Aranyaka (II. 8. 1 ff) has innumerable references from which the existence of the Pancharatra cult may be inferred. "He who knows himself as the five fold hymn from whence all spring, is wise. Earth, air, ether, water and light—those form the self, the five fold hymn. From Him all arises, into Him all resolves," About this passage, the commentator Anandatirtha remarks "There are three asitis, and a purvabhaga and an uttarabhaga. These correspond to the five forms of Vishnu—Narayana, Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha who represent earth, ether, air, light and water respectively". (Translation of Aitareya Aranyaka by Keith, p. 215 f. n.). The explanation shows the relation of the Panchabhutas with the Pancharatras or the Panchavyuhas of Vishnu, because the Pancharatra Vaisnava system was predominant at the time of the commentator. But in the Aranyaka, the passage clearly refers to a creator or Brahma.

The same chapter in the Aranyaka (Paragraph 3) again says, "Fivefold is this man" and then the five elements are identified with various limbs of a man. Then it is said "fivefold is the air". "The sacrifice is fivefold—Agnihotra, Purnima, Amavashya, Chaturmashya, animal sacrifice and Soma sacrifice." Further it is said "this litany is fivefold". Regarding this Keith writes "This section is unusually foolish. Anandatirtha exercises much ingenuity in equating the five forms of Vishnu to the several numbers of each of the sets of five". Though they appear foolish to Keith, there is no doubt that at the time of Anandatirtha, the relation of the numerals with the ratra cults, either of Vishnu or Brahma—was well known in society.

The next paragraphs in the Aranyaka refer to numbers "100, 1000, 8600" etc. All such big numerals had a special relation with the ratra cults. The Aranyaka (II. 3. 8) further says that "the Aksharas are fivefold." This is also explained by Anandatirtha as the fivefold body of Narayana, Vasudeva etc i. e. the Vyūhas. Thus the system of identifying various numbers with various manifestations of god was a known factor in India.

The Upanishads also refer to the fivefold characters of Agni. The Katha Upanishad (III. I) refers to the five Agnis. The Prasna refers to five gods who support the creatures viz. Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Apa and Prithivi. It also refers to 5 Pranas. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad refers to five quarters (East—Surya, South—Yama, West—Varuna, North—Soma, Polar—Agni) The Chhândogya Upanishad refers to a group of 5 gods. The Taittiriya Upanishad (I. 7) clearly says 'Pamktam va idam Sarvam' 'this universe is fivefold' and gives a list of groups of five things—viz. earth, antariksa, Dyaus, quarters and intermediate spaces; Fire, air, sun, moon and stars; water, osadhi, Vanaspati, Akasa and atman; eyes, ears, minds, speech, skin and the 5 Pranas. In the Svetasvatara Upanishad there is a reference to "Panchasrota, panchayoni, panchapana, Panchahudhi, panchavarta, panchadukha, panchaparva."

The Jains and Buddhists also were acquainted with and to some extent followed a Pancharatra cult. The Buddha had discarded the Panchavaggiya sages who later on became his first disciples. These five sages were perhaps the followers of a Pancharatra cult. There were at first 'three Buddhas' and then five Buddhas and then seven. This is corroborated by Buddhist traditions. "The monarch of the Brahmaloка coming to see whether the lotus was formed that indicates whether a supreme Buddha will appear in the same Kalpa or not dispersed the darkness in an instant; when they beheld five flowers with five sets of priestly requisites near them; by which they knew that the Kalpa would be honoured by the presence of 'five Buddhas.'" (Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism* pp. 63-64). Thus the Buddhists were also acquainted with a Pancharatra cult of Brahma.

The Vaikhanasa Pancharatra system was also perhaps originally a modification of the Brahma cult and not a form of Vaishnava Pancharatra. The 'Vaikhanasa' has been explained in many works as another form of Brahma. According to the Nirukta the name Nikhanah of Brahma arose for his having dug into the earth to recover the Vedas. The Boar incarnation was also ascribed to Brahma. Thus the Nirukta proves the Vaikhanasa religion to be a form of Brahma's cult; as is also indicated by the Mahabharata legend of Brahma's seven births. Vyasa in his 'Karmakanda' also says that Brahma became Vikhanas. The author of the Kalpasutra refers to the introduction of the Sramanakagni by Vikhanas. A Rigvedic hymn (IX. 66) is ascribed to the hundred Vaikhanasas, said to have been a race of saintly hermits springing from the nails of Prajapati (Griffith's note on Rigveda II, f, note, p. 318).

The Vaikhanasa system also differs from the Bhagavata sect regarding the names of the Vyuhas of Vasudeva. The 'Atri Samhita' mentions the names of the Vyuhas as Vishnu, Purusha, Satya, Achyuta and Aniruddha. According to the MahasatatKumara Samhita, the Vyuhas were Vasudeva, Daksha, his son Achyuta, his son Samkarshana (=Rudra),

his son Pradyumna and his son Aniruddha. Of these names Satya, Daksha and Samkarshana (as Rudra) associate the names with the cult of Brahma. The Ahirbudhnya Samhita further co-relates Pancharatra with Rudra Siva.

The Mahasanatkumara Samhita further relates that the four Vyuhās were four images inside the 'Anda' from which, we know, Brahma was born. The Pancharatra Samhitas also thus indicate how the Pancharatra Brahma cult was gradually converted into the Vaishnava cult. The Puranas also converted the Saptaratra cult of Brahma into a Pancharatra cult, by referring to the five births of Brahmadaṭṭa, whereas the Mahābhārata refers to his seven births. The earliest follower of the Vaikhanasa system was Yati, son of king Nahusa (Mat. Purana 24. 51).

The Manusamhita also indirectly refers to a Pancharatra cult by describing the chief duty of a Brahmana to be Panchamahājajna (Manu III. 67). The worship of 'panchadevatas', who are first offered rice by a Brahmin before eating is also related to it. It is also curious to find that there arose in India five principal religious sects—Saura, Salva, Ganapatya, Vaishnava and Sakta.

The Mahābhārata also refers to a Panchasikha as the originator of the Pancharatra cult. But the same work ascribes its origin to three factors (Hopkins—Great Epic of India p. 142ff.) (1) Panchasikha was a disciple of Kapila who was the disciple of Asuri (For 'Asuri' see next chapter). Kapila is called Panchasrotah, versed in Pancharatra, Panchajajna, Panchakrit, Panchaguna and Panchasikha. The Pancharatra Jayakhya Samhita refers to 'Sikhins' as a class of Pancharatris (See the discussion of the word 'Sikhins etc.' above). According to Buddhist tradition 'Panchasikha' is the name of a minister of Indra having 'five' heads (Hardy—Manual of Buddhism p. 57). The story of Panchasikha's visit to the Buddha is depicted in a sculpture at Bodhgaya (Barua-Bodhgaya II, p. 105 and fig. 55). Agni was also known as 'Panchasikha' (having 5 flames) and is, as such, depicted on the Panchala coins of Agni Mitra.

(2) Panchasikha was also a venerable Brahmin belonging to the family of Parasara and a Samkhya leader. His disciple

was king Janaka. The philosophy of this Pañchasikha, according to Hopkins, includes disgust of birth, acts and Nirvana, and also controverts a philosophy of the Buddhists. Hopkins is of opinion that Pañchasikha, as an author of the Samkhya System flourished in about 100 A.D. We do not know how he got at this date.

(3) The system was propounded by Asita Devala who received it from Siva. Thus, this system might refer to the Saiva-Pañcharātra religion. There are other proofs of the existence of a Saiva Pañcharātra religion too. As said before, Siva (or Rudra) had a close relation with the Brahmā cult (See next chapter). All the above factors, however, clearly associate the Pañcharātra system with Kapila and the Samkhya system, as has been already discussed in relation to the original meaning of the word Rātra.

Even the Sṛīmad Bhāgavatam, the holiest scripture of the Vaishnava Pañcharātra cult appears to be inseparably connected with the Brahmā cult. In many chapters, Brahmā is mentioned as the narrator of the legends etc. The 'creation' chapters and several chapters of the Third Book are related to the Samkhya philosophy and Kapila's birth stories. It is related therein that Brahmā first created Avidyā of five Parvans viz Tamaḥ, Moha, Mahātamaḥ, Tāmisra and Andhatāmisra. That Tamamaya body was given up by Brahmā, which became Rātri. From Brahmā's lustre was born Vidyā—from whom were born the Devas, called 'Divā' (day). Brahmā is also said to have created the Ṛishis and gave to each of them a part of his own 'limbs' such as Samādhi, Yoga, Riddhi, Tapaḥ, Vidyā and Virakti. Kapila was born of Kardama and Devahūti. Kardama was a son of Brahmā, and Devahūti was the daughter of Manu and Satarupā. The Bhāgavata further refers to the 'nine daughters of Kardama who were married to nine Rishis; the tenth issue was Kapila. The Bhāgavata thus refers to nine' Rishis, as opposed to 7 Rishis mentioned in other texts. The Bhāgavata had perhaps some relation with the Navarātra cult, as Vāsudeva cult has been shown above to have really

such an association.

In this work the Varāha (incarnation) is said to have come out of the nose of Brahmā. Kāla is mentioned as the twenty-fifth tattva. Kapila's birth story and his philosophy are so elaborately described in the Bhāgavata, as to clearly indicate, as contended above, the relation of the rātra cult with the Sāmkhya philosophy. Purusha, according to the Bhāgavata, consists of Ahaṁkāra, Pañchabhūta and eleven Indriyas. This gives the number '17' as making up the Purusha, as '17' was the sacred number of Vedic Prajāpati (Brahmā). Purusha and these 17 tattvas make up the number "18" which has been suggested above as the favourite numeral of the Mahabharata when it was converted into a Viṣṇava work.

The Pañcharātra Samhitas also indicate how they had assimilated the doctrines of other cults. According to the Ahirbudhnya Samhita, Samkarshana was Rudra, and Aniruddha was Padmanābha. (Schrader p. 69). Similarly 'Mahat' got many synonyms such as Vidyā, Go, Avani, Brahmā, Badhū, Vṛiddhi, Madhu, Īvara, Prajñā, Buddhi and so on. Many of these thus make 'Mahat' as equivalent to Brahmā. Ahaṁkāra, similarly, is made synonymous with 'Prajāpati, and 'Bodhī'. In the Vedānta philosophy too, Mahat is equationed with Brahmā. The Manu Samhita (XII. 50), however, differentiates Mahat from Brahmā, though both of these are recognised as gods. All these references indicate how the Sāmkhya principles and the philosophy of the Rātra cults are inseparably connected with the concrete form of a god named Brahmā who was worshipped as a god and also philosophised in various ways in various religious or philosophical systems. All these religions and philosophy thus may be regarded to have originated from the earlier cult of Brahmā worship. The later religions tried to obliterate the older Brahmā cult but could not successfully do it.

The dates of the known Pañcharātra Vaishnava texts also indicate the late origin of the Viṣṇava Pañcharātra cult. According to Schrader the latest date of the genuine Samhitas is 8th century A.D. According to Dr. J. N. Banerjee, the

earliest works were written in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Vyūhavāda of this system was known to Patanjali (2nd. century B.C.) who mentions Krishna 'Vāsudeva' as second to Samkarṣaṇa, whereas in the vyūha system, first was Vasudeva and second to him was Samkarṣaṇa. How this position of the two was inverted is inexplicable to scholars. According to Banerjee, even at the time of Patanjali the Vyūhas were remembered as merely human heroes not yet raised to the position of divinities. But the paradox may be explained in another way. Of the Vyūhas, Vasudeva or Krishna was most probably regarded as a god even before Patanjali. Reference to the sect of Krishna (Vasudeva) in Pāṇini has not been accepted by all scholars as indicating the divine position of Krishna. But the reference to the worship of Herakles by the people 'Surasenoi' of 'Methora' as found in the account of Megasthenes perhaps indicates that even then Krishna was equationed with 'Hari'. The name of the God 'Herakles' might have been a Greek form of the compound 'Hari-Krishna'. Similarly, the Cleisobora of Megasthenes has been taken as 'Krishnapura'—the word 'kles' in 'Harakles' may therefore be regarded as same as 'Krishna' and 'Hera' perhaps was a corruption of 'Hari' or 'Haré'. In that case, the worship of Krishna (Vasudeva) had begun at least in western part of India in or before the fourth century B.C. In the eastern parts of India, the Vasudeva rātra cult might have spread a little later. The Pañcharātra Samhitas identify 'Samkarshana' with Rudra. Samkarshana was thus most probably at first connected with the Vyūha of Brahmā (Rudra and Brahmā being very closely related) and continued to have been worshipped as such in the eastern territories upto 2nd century B.C. It was therefore that Patanjali places Vasudeva after Samkarasana; for it was just then that Vasudeva was being regarded as a god and placed by the side of Samkarshana; Samkarshana being an older god to these easterners got the first place.

The legend about the birth of Balarama (Samkarashana) is a mysterious one. He was extracted out of Devaki's womb and

placed in that of 'Rohini'. This story appears to be significant. It perhaps refers to the fact that Samkarshana was previously a Saiva god or a god related to Brahmā, and later on mixed up with the cult of Vāsudeva. It was perhaps after this mixture that the Vasudeva cult was also mixed up with the Rātra cult which was previously a form of Brahmā worship. That Samkarshana was a popular god of eastern India, his worshippers being 'ascetics with shaven heads or with braided hair' is definitely known from the Arthasastra (Translation of Arthasastra p. 485). These worshippers of Samkarshana could not have been worshippers of Balarāma-Samkarshana. Thus if the Arthasastra be regarded as a work of the 4th century B.C., we may conclude that the Vyūhāvāda of Vasudeva and Samkarshana arose in Eastern India after the 4th century B.C.—it might have arisen just before the time of Patanjali or 2nd. century B.C., as shown above. These legends thus may be taken to point to the time when the Brahmā cult or the Saptarātra cult was suppressed gradually by the Vaishnava Pañcharātra cult. The Gayāsura legend in the Puranas also clearly shows how the Vishnu cult suppressed the Brahmā-Dharma-Siva cult of Bodhgaya in a very early period; but the worship of Dharma and Siva continued even afterwards, till perhaps the rise of the Vaishnava Pañcharātra cult and Buddhism totally destroyed the older cult in that area.

The Rātra cults of Brahmā may thus be regarded as a very old system of India. As it has been already said, Buddhism, Jainism and the Vedic religions were also influenced by it. In fact, it has already been hinted at that the Vedic religion had really suppressed the Rātra cult of Brahmā. As the Vedic religion arose in the west, the rātra cult was suppressed first in that region, but it continued to exist in other parts of India where it helped the rise of Buddhism and Jainism (as will be shown in other chapters).

Scholars are of opinion that the Vedic god Indra had really suppressed or superseded some earlier gods such as—Varuna, Trīta, Dyauś, Pṛithivī etc. It may be similarly shown that the

Vedic religion of worship of Indra suppressed the worship of Pitṛins, Prajāpati Brahmā, Siva and such others as related to the Brahmā's rātra cult. The Gods Varuna, Trita etc. are supposed by scholars to be gods of the Indo-Iranian period; but the worship of Pitṛins, Brahmā and Siva were perhaps not existing in that period. The suppression of these latter gods was an Indian affair and shows the suppression of Brahmā's cult by the cult of Indra and sacrifice.

In the Vedas Agni is known to have been re-discovered by Yama out of his watery abode where he had hidden himself "fearing to share the fate of his three elder brothers who had perished in the service of the gods" (Griffiths—Rigveda X.51-f. note). This indicates Yama to have been a god who was worshipped before Agni acquired his position in the Vedic pantheon. Moreover, before Agni, his three other brothers had perished. This may refer to three earlier gods whose worship was suppressed before Agni's Vedic worship began. Another hymn (Rig. X. 124) also shows how the Agni cult and Indra suppressed Varuna (or the father). Yama, however, remained with Agni, which may mean that Yama became a Vedic god with Indra and Agni.

Another obscure verse in the Rigveda (VI. 59. 1) invokes Indra and Agni as two brothers. "(Your ?) Fathers (pitāro), enemies of gods, were smitten down, and Indra—Agni, you survived". Sāyana explains 'pitāro' as Asuras and demons; Wilsoo as 'the Pitṛins, enemies of Gods, have been slain by you.' Griffith says that "Gods of an elder generation, the fathers of Indra and Agni appear to be intended and the gods were not killed but degraded or deprived of their power, like the earlier Hellenic gods." Indra and Agni were born of a common father, Dyaus, according to Griffith, and Prajāpati, according to Sayana. The mother of the gods is said to be 'in every place.' She is Aditi, according to Griffith and Pṛithivī, according to Sayana. This hymn thus may be taken to signify that the worship of Indra and Agni were prevailing from before the Vedic period but the Vedic people gave up the worship of Pitṛins, Brahmā,

and Earthgoddess but continued the worship of Indra and Agni. Sayana's commentary associates the Vedic cult of Indra-Agni arising out of Brahmā (Prajāpati) and Earthgoddess cult of prevedic period. The Rātra cults involved the worship of Brahmā and Earthgoddess and the Rigvedic tradition about their suppression by Indra-Agni is apparent from this hymn.

Indra is further known (Rig. VIII. 85. 16) to have been the foe of 'Seven who never had met a rival'. These 'Seven' are regarded as seven Asuras. But this 'seven' indicates the rivalry of the Indra cult with the cult of Seven (Saptarātra), which in the Vedic period was regarded as an Asura cult. Indra is further said to have quelled (Rig. X. 99) 'this Saptatha's magic devices.' This 'Saptatha' may also be a reference to the Saptarātra magic cult. It has already been said above that the Brahmanas clearly refer to the death of Prajāpati and the attempts of gods to revive him. All these Vedic and Brahmana references clearly indicate the existence of a cult of Brahmā before the Rigvedic period. The religious schism which brought the Vedic cult into existence has already been referred to before. This Vedic cult was the cult of sacrifice to Indra, and Agni; the older cult was the worship of several Vedic gods and Brahmā etc. The Rigvedic hymn referring to 'survival' of Indra-Agni indicates that they were also worshipped before. The Vedas thus gave rise to a new form of religion in which some old gods were retained and some were given up. The given-up gods, however, as shown before, were 'taken up by the Asuras'. (See references in Brahmanas mentioned before) and called 'Rātri', and the new (Vedic) gods were known as 'Divā' gods. Thus the Puranic traditions about Prajāpati's death and rise of Vedic gods and Asura (Rātri) gods are supported by the Vedas and Brahmanas. The Mahabharata tradition describing the rise of the Vedic religion in the fourth birth of Brahmā may thus be corroborated.

Several Puranic Chronology and legends also indicate the rise of a great religious schism in India. Āyū of the Lunar race of kings had two sons Nahuṣa and Rāji. Nahuṣa's sons were

Yati and Yayāti, and Rāji had hundred sons. Yati is known to have become a 'Vaikhāṇasa (shown before to be one of the earliest cult of India, promulgated by Brahmā in his first birth, and allied to the cult of Brahmā). Yayāti's story is well known. The story of his attempt to seek 'Nirjaras' (freedom from jarā or oldage) perhaps really means his acceptance of the Jain doctrine of 'Nirjaras'. Yayāti after gaining back youth is said to have again left his home and performed a severe tapasyā, like the Jains. Similarly, the hundred sons of Rāji are said in the Puranas to have become enemies of Indra, converted to Jainism and later on killed. The Atharvaveda also refers to Indra as having killed Rāji. Yatis were also killed by Indra, according to the Brahmanas. These 'Yatis' might have given rise to the Puranic story of 'Yati', for both Yati and the 'Yatis' followed a non-Vedic cult.

Yayāti's sons, according to the Puranas, were Anu, Drahyu, Puru, Yadu and Turvasa. These names are mentioned in the Vedas as names of the five tribes of Vedic India. Though scholars do not identify these tribal names with those of Yayāti's sons, the Vedic traditions about Yati, Yatis, Nahusha (who wanted to become Indra according to Mahabharata Udyoga Parva) and Yayāti raise a strong suspicion about the correctness of the view held by scholars. According to several Brahmanas (Jaiminiya Br. I 185-86) when the Yatis were killed by Indra, one of them Prithu Vainya was saved and became the first Kshatra. Puranas also make 'Prithu' as the first coronated king of the earth. Prithu's father Vena is known in the Puranas to have been an irreligious enemy of the gods and hence being killed by them. According to Jain traditions, Vena was a Jain. According to Puranic Chronology all these kings—Yati, Yayāti, Rājeyas and Vena were in the third, fourth or fifth generations of men descended from Varasvata or Chākshusha Manu. All traditions of these kings are mentioned in the Vedas as being occurrences of the past—i. e. they ruled before the Vedas. The religious struggle between the Devas and Asuras, between the Vedic gods and rātra gods thus occurred before the

Vedic religion had got a new shape after the suppression of the Rātra cults. The Vedas are known even in the Brāhmanas to have sprung from the mouth of Brāmā.

All the above mentioned traditions thus may be regarded as sufficient proof to regard the Rātra cults as a prevedic religion. Brāmā was the chief god of that religion; but even Indra, Rudra Vāyu, Agni, Yama and several such gods who were known to the Vedas, were also worshipped in that religion.

The Yatis are found in the Rigveda as being helped by Indra, the Vedic god (Rig. III. 3. 9) and even deified (Rig. X. 72. 7) and in the Samaveda as being classed with Indra and Mitra as slayers of Vṛitra. In the Brāhmana period they were regarded as enemies of Indra (i.e. Veda). Other non-Vedic tribes mentioned in the Vedas were the Paṇis and Kikāṣas. Even in the Vedas they are found to be worshippers of Indra, but enemies of the Vedic people. Thus a Vedic Rishi is found chiding Indra for favouring the Kikāṣas (Rig. III. 53. 14). Similarly another Rishi chides the Aswins for being amidst the Paṇis ("why do you stay there among the people who are held in high esteem though not offering sacrifice?"—Rig. 7. 83. 3) and prays the gods to kill them. This rivalry between Indra worshippers has not been properly explained by scholars. The Yatis are regarded as non-Aryan priests, (R. Chanda—M.A.S. I no. 41 p. 33) and the Kikāṣas and Paṇis are also considered as original non-Aryan settlers of India. If so, the Yatis could not be regarded as a friend of Indra in the earlier period and his foe in a later period; the Kikāṣas could not get favour from Indra nor could the Paṇis have among them the Aswins. All these references thus show that even in the Rigvedic period there were people who worshipped the Vedic gods and also offered sacrifices, and there were also others who worshipped gods named in the Vedas but did not offer sacrifices. This confirms the theory that the Rātra cult was not exactly the Vedic cult but included the worship of some gods who are also mentioned in the Vedas. The Rātra religion was an earlier form of Indian religion in which Brāmā's various Tanus or the elements were the

principal objects of worship, after a schism, some people began to worship Brahma in the form of Sacrifices and with Indra as the chief god of the cult. The old religion was suppressed by the Vedic religion. But as has been already stated, there are reasons to believe that the old religion continued in distant places of India till a much later period. The Vedas indicate, according to scholars two stages of the Vedic religion—a period of simple worship of the Vedic gods, and a sacerdotal age (See Keith's Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads). The last stage was that of the real Vedic religion. The older stage was cleverly suppressed in the Vedas, and may be known only from several obscure verses. Thus the Rigveda formed a new sect in India by reforming the old religion and not totally destroying the religion of so called non Aryans. Thus gave rise to the struggle of the Devas and Asuras—the Devas being worshippers of 'Diva' gods and Asuras as worshippers of 'Ratra' gods—gods associated with Brahma and his dependent gods.

This view explains why the Dautyas, Asuras etc are regarded as enemies by the Vedic worshippers, though in the Puranas they are found worshipping Indian gods like Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva (mostly Brahma) and are described as having been born of the same parents as of the gods. The reasons of enmity between them were not racial, but because the Asuras did not worship in the Vedic method (though worshipping some of the Vedic gods) but adhered to the old method of worship.

It may thus be presumed that the Vedic religion was a reformation of the older Indian Brahma or Ratra cult, and if the Vedic gods were also known to India before the rise of the Vedas, the Vedic gods cannot be regarded as being imports into India by the so called Aryan invaders. Moreover it will be shown below that the Ratra cults and its gods were very likely known to the ancient Persians, the early Babylonians, the Pre Hellenic Greece and perhaps even the Egyptians. The similarity of the Hellenic Greek mythology and pre Avestan gods with those of the Vedas led the scholars to postulate the theory of the Aryan invasion into India. But the similarity of

the pre-Vedic Indian culture with the earliest known outside civilisations cannot be explained by reference to the Aryan invasion. Some scholars have propounded a theory of a double Aryan invasion (for explaining the internal struggle among Indra worshippers), others may explain it by a Dravidian invasion from the Mediterranean world. But the earliest known Indian civilisation of the Indus Valley will also be shown to have some similarity with that of the followers of the Ratra cults, and this culture, according to latest views, cannot be regarded as having an origin outside India (Pigot—*Prehistoric India*—p. 146).

The reformed religion of Zoroaster may be shown to have arisen out of the religious schism of India—the division of the Indian religion into the 'Vedic cult' and the 'Ratra' cult of Brahma. It has been already said that the Brahma worshippers worshipped the elements, of which 'Mahat' was one. It has been also said that 'Mahat' was known to Indians not only as an abstract tattva but also as a god, identical with or slightly different from Brahma (*Pancharatra Samhitas*, *Manu* etc). Now in the new Persian religion of the Avesta, the chief god was 'Ahur Mazda' who have been regarded by scholars as equivalent to 'Varuna', or Maghavan of the Vedas. How 'Varuna' could be 'Mazda' is inexplicable. Philologically, 'Mazda, or 'Mazd' is equivalent to 'Mahat' ('H' changed into Z). Thus the Persians accepted 'Mahat', the Indian Brahma as their chief god. 'Mahat' in India was a god of the Asuras (according to Brahmanas) in the eyes of the followers of the Vedas. The Persians in giving up the Vedic traditions, retained therefore the title 'Asura' for their god; to the Vedic Indians 'Mahat' was the god of 'Ratri', but the Persians, accepting 'Mahat' made him the god of light and day. As opposed to the Ratri gods was the Indian gods of 'day' (Ahan or Diva), but the Persians naturally called these rivals of Mahat as 'Ahriman', a god of darkness. The Persian god 'Mahat' had seven followers called 'Ameshaspentas' and opposed to them were the Seven 'Daivas' (=Diva gods). Here we find how the Vedic gods or 'Diva' gods (opposed to

Ratra gods) were converted by Persians into the opposer of their gods (Mahat—the ratra god). This shows the hostility of the Persians with the Vedic cult. The Vedic god 'Indra' thus became a demon to the Persian Avestan religion. As 'Vritraghna' was the conqueror of the Vedic people, the Persians also retained that title for their 'god of victory', but it was not to them the title of 'Indra'. The number 'Seven' attached to the followers of 'Ahur Mazda' also indicates the relation of his cult to the Saptaratra cult. (Ameshaspentas may be the Persian equivalent for 'mesha-Sapta' or seven goats. Brahma's or Siva's another name was 'Ajapala' and 'Aja' also means a 'goat'). It is true that the Ahur Mazda cult has also been traced in Babylon, but even the Babylonians perhaps had learnt it from India. Thus the Avestan religion might have been an offshoot of the religious schism in India—the rise of the new Vedic religion in India.

The rivalry between the 'Deva' cult and 'Asura' cult is supposed by scholars to have arisen in Persia, before the Indo-Iranians had migrated to India. The followers of 'Deva' cult left for India and some 'Asura' worshippers are also believed to have proceeded to India (Hence Asura' is found as the title of some gods in the Rigveda). But the history of the Ratra cult, as discussed before, rather shows this schism to have arisen in India. Nowhere, except in India, has Mahat such a great history (a cult and a philosophy, the samkhya) and influence over the minds of the people. If the number of followers of the Asura cult who had come to India had been so small as the scholars believe, it would not have been possible for the Samkhya Philosophy to have arisen in India and attained such a prominent position among the followers of all Indian religions. The followers of the Vedas evolved the philosophy of 'Brahma' (from their old god Brahma who had to them now become Sacrifice itself) and those of the Brahma cult (the ratris or tattvas) promulgated the Samkhya philosophy. {No such development had taken place in Persia. Moreover, it has been suggested above that in India, the Ratra cult (Brahma worship) existed from before the

Vedic period; and the Avestan religion sprang up long after 1500 B. C. (supposed date of the Vedas). The borrowers in this case must have been the Persians and not the Indians. The Pre-Avestan Persian religion being similar to the Vedic religion may also be explained as the result of contact of Indians with Persians before the great religious schism in India.

In Pre-Hellenic Greece there were several gods who got a great resemblance with the gods connected with the Ratra cults. Thus Ouranos has been compared with Varuna; Ge or Gaia may be equated with Go or the Earthgoddess of India; Okeanos was similar to the Indian god of ocean; Helios was the Sun God; Moon was called Selene. Sun and moon were also included in the Ratra pantheon. According to the Satapatha Brahmana (VII.1.2.7) moon was a body of Prajapati. The Ratra god Kala is also most curiously found in Greece as Cronos and Taita, a son of Brahma is also perhaps represented in Greece as the Titans, sons and daughters of Ouranos and Gaia.

These early Greek gods were superseded by the Hellenic god Zeus, supposed to represent the victory of reason and intelligence over the rude forces of nature. According to the Puranas, formerly there was no religion; religion began when the Vedas were created by Brahma and the Vedas made Indra (Zeus) the supreme god by suppressing the Ratra (pre-Vedic) gods. Indra suppressed Brahma and Pitris just as Zeus also killed his father. Even after Zeus had become the supreme god, some ancient gods still survived—such as Hades (god of the lower world = Yama) and Kala (who also remained as Vedic gods,) and Poseidon (equivalent to Varuna as the god of the sea) and they, along with Zeus are represented as sons of Kronos, just as Yama arose out of Kala or Dharma of the Ratra cults. The mother of Zeus was Rhea (the great mother, sitting by the side of a lion) and she may be compared with the Indian Mother goddess Sri or Uma, (whose Vija-mantra is 'Hrim'), with whom the Ratra cults were also

related. As the Ratra cults were associated with 'horns' (as shown before—Sikhin etc.), and as Dharma in India is represented as a bull, so was Zeus a bull and bull's horn was associated as a ritual furniture in the worship of Zeus. The Mother Goddess had three forms in Greece and so there were three Mothers according to the Ratra cult. The Greek gods arose after the Mother Goddess cult and so was Brahma said to have arisen, out of Prithivi.

The doctrine of numbers was a cardinal feature of the Ratra cults, and such a doctrine also existed in other parts of the world. The Pythagorean, the earliest known philosophy of Greece was based on a theory of numbers. "They held things to the numbers. They hold numbers to be more adequate prototype of existence than water, air etc." They had contended themselves with the general proposition that 'Number was the principle of things; that all was number' (Schwegler—History of Philosophy—translation pp. 12-13). The Greeks also regarded creation to have come from water, air etc. as the Ratra worshippers did. Pythagorus and his philosophy, however, gave more stress on number, as did the earliest followers of ratra cults. Pythagorus is also said to have learnt the theory of metempsychosis from India and as already said, this theory had a special relation with the Ratra cult. Weber believed that Pythagorus also knew the Buddha. It is also curious that the Greeks called the Sixth century B.C. as the 'Age of Seven Sages' in Greece, just as the Seven Sages of the Ratra cults. Weber takes 'Pythagorus' to mean 'an inspired one' equal to Buddha the enlightened, and was of opinion that the word may mean 'preacher of Buddhism'. Buddhism, as will be shown, was also based on the ratra cults and knew the theory of numbers in some form.

The religion of Pythagorus, apart from his philosophy, had also a resemblance with the Ratra doctrines. This religion was the Orphic religion which arose before Pythagorus. The teachers of this doctrine had a theory of creation of the world which, Bury thinks, was suggested to them by Babylonia

(Bury—History of Greece p. 310 ff.) "They taught that Time was the original principle, that then ether and chaos came into being; that out of these elements Time formed a silver egg, from which sprang the first born of the gods, Phanes, god of light". Zeus swallowed Phanes and thereby becomes the original force from which the world has to be developed anew.

It is to be noticed that in the Orphic religion 'Time' was the creator. Time or Kala was also similarly regarded in India (See next chapter). Ether and chaos may be regarded as the tattvas 'Marut' and 'Vyom' of India—two of the Ratras. In Greece, creation is said to have sprung from the "silver egg" and in India it arose out of the 'Golden egg'. Phanes who arose out of the egg was the god of light and so was Brahma who was like the 'Sun' (Sahasramsu Samoprabham). Zeus devoured Phanes, so did Indra kill Brahma. It is likely that 'Phanes' is equivalent to 'Phoni' or 'Ahi' of the Vedas who was killed by Indra. Ahi Budhnyo was a retro god and regarded as Rudra. Thus the Orphic theory of creation has a close resemblance with the Indian creation legends of the ratra cults. The Orphic religion, like the ratra cults, prescribes asceticism, abstinence from animal food and other ceremonies of purification. The soul, according to it passes through a cycle of incarnations. Reward or punishment after death comes according to man's deeds in the body. These doctrines were also similar to those of the ratra cults and Buddhism which was also based on the former.

The theology of the Orphic religion is further developed by the story of Zeus, Dionysus and the Titans. The Titans killed Dionysus (son of Zeus) who was escaping in the form of a bull, on which Zeus killed the Titans and out of their ashes sprang the race of men. This story appears to be an echo of Indra's struggles with Vritra (son of Brahma). Dionysus and his bull-form reminds us of Siva and his bull. Megasthenes refers to the worship of Dionysus in India which scholars take to refer to the worship of Siva. The Vedic cult of Indra had suppressed the cult of Siva. The philosophy, and religion of Pythagorans

may thus be shown to have a close resemblance with the pre-Vedic ratra cults of India. Even if Greece had learnt it from Babylon, the question arises as to how and from where the Babylonians got these things.

Ancient Babylonia may also be similarly shown to have been indebted to India in various matters. The number 'Seven' was, as in India, of especial sanctity to the Babylonians. We find there the group of 'Seven stars,' 'Seven demons', stars being grouped in companies of Seven, such as 'Seven Tikshi, seven Lumashi, Seven Mashi'. "The importance of this magical number is emphasised by the group of seven demons which rose from the deep to range over the land. Perhaps the sanctity of Seven was suggested by the Orion, the Bears and the Pleiad, one of which constellations may have been the 'seven fold' deity and addressed as 'one'. (Mackenzie—Myths of Babylon p. 300). We may compare the 'Saptarshis of India with the Babylonian constellations. How the group of seven stars became so sacred to Babylon and India is not known. It may be suggested that these constellations became their favourites due to the sacredness of the 'number Seven' and not that the sanctity of the number arose from the star groups.

Moreover, the number 'three', 'six' and 'Ten' were also favourite with the Babylonians. Celestial region was divided into three parts. The 'fields' were allotted to the ancient Triad formed by Ea, Anu and Bel. This Triad reminds us of the Indian Triratna system. "The Indian system of Yugas or ages of the world presents many features which forcibly reminds us of the Euphratean scheme." "In both countries the measurement of time and space were arrived at by utilising the numerals 10 and 6" (Myths of Babylon p. 310). The theory of Yugas was more allied to the ratra or creation legends than to the Vedic cults. In Babylonian Arithmetic 'six' and 'Sixty' are important numbers. 'Sixty' is related to Yoga, as 'Sishtitantra' was a name of Yoga. The Babylonian sanctity for numbers may thus be compared with that of India.

Further we find that "the basal idea in Babylonian astrology appears to be the recognition of the astral bodies

as Spirits or Fates, who exercised an influence over the gods, the world and mankind. They were worshipped in groups when they were yet nameless. They addressed, 'powerful, O Sevenfold, one are Ye' may have been a constellation consisting of seven stars." The Saptaratra cult also had special relations with 'Spirits,' the departed Pitris (males), having power to shower good or evil on mankind. Among the Palasians, the gods had no names—they were called 'gods', the oldest deities were simply 'fat-s' or groups called 'Sevenfold'. The Babylonian Anu and En had seven demons as messengers. Anu has been regarded as equivalent to Brahma. His seven messengers might be the Maruts who are also seven or forty-nine (7×7). The Sumerian god of air was called 'Enlil' which is so similar to the name 'Anil' of the Indian Air god. A goddess, like Durga, standing on or sitting by a lion is found in ancient Babylon as well as in Crete.

It is further interesting to find that according to the Sumerian legends, the length of reigns of the 8 kings of the Pre-flood dynasty was 241,200 years (Pigot's *Prehistoric India* p. 59). This number must have originated from the sanctity of the number '12' to the Sumerians and may be compared with the number 84000 which was so popular with the Buddhists and Jains. The Jains multiplied 12 by 8 and got 84, whereas the Sumerians had 'eight' kings and they ruled for an absurd number of years, multiples of '12'. Brahma's Yuga in India is also thus known as consisting of 12000 Chaturyugas. This kind of similarity may not be the result of mere chance. The similarity of the Babylonian and Indian Deluge legends is well known. It will be shown later on that the Deluge legend was more associated with the Brahma cult than the Vedic cult of Vishnu.

The Ratra cult of Brahma and the associated gods may be traced also in ancient Egypt. The descriptions of Isis and Osiris as left by Diodorus ultimately refer to five principal gods of the Egyptians corresponding to the Indian gods—of the Spirit, fire, earth, water and air. These five gods and their nature have a close resemblance to the Pancharatra gods. Dr. A. C. Das also showed the Egyptian

religion to have a close similarity with the worship of gods—Siva, Kama and Kalaratri and he also thought it probable that the Egyptians had the knowledge of a god equivalent to Brahman or Brahma. (A.C. Das—*Rig-vedic India* Vol. II Ch. XII). Dr. Das believed that the Egyptians migrated from the Pandya kingdom in the period of transition from the Vedic to the Puranic period.

The Egyptian 'Ka' (Spirit) may be an equivalent of 'Kah' of the Upanishads. The number 'three' and its multiples had evidently a magical significance in Egypt (Mackenzie—*Egyptian Myths and Legends*—p. 161). Thus Ra, Khepra and Tum formed the Sun triad. The Sun god had seven descendants. God Ra had fourteen or seven Ba's (souls). The idea that the Sun god was an incarnation of the creator was also imported into Egypt from Asia (Mackenzie). This is found also in the Ratra cult.

Similarly the 'Mothers' or the seven Egyptian 'Fates' were the Seven Hathors (cf. the seven Krittikas). 'Ptah' was the creator of the universe, and was an artisan god, like Vedic creator God Tvashtri. He was also a self-created god like Brahma Svayambhu.

The most interesting parallelism may be noticed in the legend of the Egyptian God Osiris having 'three mothers'—Isis, Nephtys and Nut. Osiris is also called a Bull. Similarly in the Veda (Rig. III. 56), a bull is called the son of three mothers, the bull referring either to the Sun god or a creator God Tvashtri or Brahma. Osiris is called, 'The Bull, begotten of the two cows, Isis and Nephtys,' though he is also known as the son of his mother 'Nut' (Mackenzie—*Egyptian Myths and legends* p. XXXII). Bull is especially related to 'Dharma' and 'Siva' and the 'three mothers' of the Panchariatra cult related to the cult of Brahma. Thus the Egyptians might have learnt the Indian legends of the pre-Vedic period and the Vedic period as well.

The above mentioned review of the similarity of the Babylonian, Greek and Egyptian religions with the Ratra cults and creation legends, sanctity of numbers and Brahma indicates the non-Vedic and pre-Vedic character of the

Brahma cult. These similarities cannot be explained by the theory of the Aryan migration. The antiquity of the Ratra cults may thus be inferred from their existence in the period when the ancient Sumerians, Cretans and Egyptians lived on this world.

CHAPTER 2

WORSHIP OF BRAHMĀ

“Brahmā Kritayuge pūjya—stretāyām
yajña uccyaté
Dvāpare pūjyate Visnu—rahaṁ pūjya—
ścaturṣvapi ”
(Brahmāṇḍā Purāṇa, 33. 20).

There was a cult in ancient India, perhaps a pre-Vedic one, known as the Rātrā cult. The cult was mainly and originally associated with a creator God or Brahmā. But scholars are of opinion that Brahmā was a post-Vedic or Paurāṇic god and hence his cult cannot be said to have existed before the Vedic period. In fact scholars do not believe in the existence of any special cult of Brahmā, though his worship was known in India. The antiquity of Brahmā, the methods of his worship, and whether there was really a sect of Brahmā will therefore be discussed in this chapter.

Brahmā is regarded in all Indian traditions as the supreme creator god. He is said to be the creator of the world, men, gods, Asuras and even the Vedas and all religions. Though some traditions refer to, Brahmā's origin from the navel of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa even the most sectarian of the Purāṇas describe him as having produced the creation. The Liṅga Purāṇa

(Pt. I. 3. 28), the Vishṇu (I. 2. 45), the Bhāgavata (III. 20. 12). and many other texts admit it. Many texts call Brahṁā Svayambhū' i.e. self-born, and thus the first and oldest of the gods.

But apparently opposed to this most popular and clear conception of the creator God, is the idea of the creator god in Vedas, Upanishads and other philosophical systems of India. The difficulty about him increases when we find various gods being often described as the creator. In the Vedas practically all the gods are eulogised by their worshippers as creators. But apart from it, several gods have been definitely called the creator in the creation hymns. They are known by different names—Viśvakarmā, Tvastā, Bṛhaspati or Brahmanaspati. The most famous of them was the 'puruṣa' of the tenth Maṇḍala of the R̥gveda, supposed by scholars as a late addition to the R̥gveda. Two other Vedic creators were 'Hiraṇyagarbha' and 'Prajāpati' who in the R̥gveda cannot be properly identified with any definite known god.

According to Keith "prajāpati is even a slighter figure than Viśvakarmā in the R̥gveda, and his name as distinct deity occurs only four times, one late hymn being given to him (R.V. X. 121, 85. 43, 169). But Prajāpati is essentially in the later Saṁhitas and Brāhmaṇas regarded as the chief of the gods, and in special the father god who produces everything, who is the father of the gods and also of the Asuras. Prajāpati is the hero of the cosmogonic myths of the whole of the Brāhmaṇa period, he creates the worlds, the Vedas and the castes. In the Sūtras, he is specifically identified with Brahman, the god, the masculine of the idea of Brahman, 'Holy prayer' or the 'Holy power' (Keith—Philosophy and Religion of the Vedas etc. p. 207).

According to Macdonell, there are many passages in the Brāhmaṇas where he is recognised as the chief god (5B II. 1, 6, 14, TB 8, 1, 3, 4, 5 B 2, 2, 4, SB 2, 4, 4, 1) and in the Āśvalāyana Gṛhya sūtrā (3, 4 etc.), he is identified with Brahṁā. Prajāpati also occurs in the R̥gveda (IV. 53. 2) as an epithet of Savitṛi and as also of Soma (IX. 59). In one hymn Prajāpati

bears the title 'Hiranyagarbha, the golden germ (ex. 121. 1) and this mention of him is elaborated in the Atharvaveda (IV. 2. 8) and by the later literature to the rank of a supreme deity (T. S. V. 5. 1. 2). In the Atharvaveda he appears as the embryo which is produced in the waters on the process of creation "His position is definitely identified with that of Prajāpati in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā, and in the post-Vedic literature he becomes 'Brahmā (Keith—Religion & Ph. of Vedas etc. p. 208 ff).

Similarly, regarding 'Purusha of the R̥gveda', Macdonell remarks that "In the Atharvaveda and the Upanishads, Purusha is also pantheistically interpreted as identical with the universe. He is also identified with Brahmā in the Chhāndogya Upanishad (1. 7. 5). In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, he is the same as prajāpati, the creator." He is identified with Prajāpati and Brahman in the Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā. Even the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says that Purusha was born as Brahmā.

Thus the scholars believe that god Brahmā was conceived in the post-Vedic period, the earliest creator god was Viśvakarmā, then Prajāpati, Hiranyagarbha or Purusha, and though later literature might identify all these gods, the R̥gvedic creator god was not Brahmā. Moreover, Prajāpati of the R̥gveda is sometimes an epithet of the sun god or Soma; and references to him are very scanty. The White Yajurveda also identifies Prajāpati with the Sun (XXXI. 1. 18-22). According to the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (1. 6. 4. 1) "Prajāpati becoming Savitṛi created living beings." In the Chhāndogya Brāhmaṇa, Heaven and Earth are said to have arisen from the egg and "Whatever was produced is the sun, which is Brahmā." Thus if 'Brahmā' is regarded as distinct from Prajāpati (Brahmā) of the Brāhmaṇas and later Vedas, Brahmā cannot be said to have been worshipped in India before the later Vedic period.

It is, therefore, necessary to review the problem of the existence of so many names of the creator god. Our difficulty may be removed if we presume that these various names of the creator god arose out of the fact that these various names

were in the R̥gvedic period extent in various parts of the Vedic world and different tribes regarded their god as the creator and gave them different names. As the composition of the R̥gveda took a long time to be accomplished, the R̥gvedic Indians grow more and more acquainted with the gods of various parts of India and these gods were gradually given a place in the R̥gvedic pantheon. That the same god was often known by different names in different regions is also known from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (1.7.3.8) in which it is said "These are the names of Agni—Śarva, as the Eastern people call him, Bhava as the Vāhikas, Pasūnāmpati, Rudra and Agni." Śarva, Bhava, Rudra, Pasunāmpati etc. were really different gods of different regions, but owing to some common characteristics they were identified with one another and ultimately with Vedic Agni. But even though they were identified with Agni, we know that these names were also the names of Śiva and the Indus valley remains perhaps indicate that 'Pasunāmpati' existed before the Vedic Agni. We cannot now say that these names were at first to Vedic Agni and then became appellations of the later god Śiva. Similarly we cannot say that the name Brahmā arose after Prajāpati or Hiraṇyagarbha and other creator gods of the Vedas. Keith also points out that god Brahman as known to the Buddhists was Brahma Sahampati, a name unknown to other texts, because that name prevailed only in the region where Buddhism arose. The Buddhists also knew many names of Brahmā such as Mahā Brahman, and referred to Brahmās in the plural. We find a similar phenomenon in the ancient Hellenic world where the Mother Goddess assumed three forms, as She was supposed to manifest herself in different districts (Mackenzie—Myths of Crete p. 59). Thus we may also conclude that Brahmā was a very ancient god and he assumed various forms and names in different parts of India in different ages. The Brāhmaṇas and later Vedas gave Brahmā the name of Prajāpati as that was perhaps the popular name of the god in that region and in that age. In the R̥gvedic world, the god had various names in various districts, and often other

gods; how could their position improve if they were called 'priests' (Brahma means 'a priest') ? Similarly, Indra had recently occupied a higher position in the R̥gvedic period and his dignity is also being expressed by identifying him with god Brahmā, and not a 'priest'.

Bṛihaspati is, no doubt, known to the later Indian traditions as the chief priest of the gods. But in the R̥gveda he occupies the position of a principal god. Muir also (Ibid p. 283) has referred to many passages from various Maṇḍalas of the R̥gveda where Agni is mentioned separately from Bṛihaspati or Brahmanaspati. Thus the above mentioned passages do not emerge the two gods into one, but merely extols one's position by comparison with the other. Brahmanaspati of the Veda had intimate relation with Indra, as Brahmā had with Indra in the Buddhist texts. The above R̥gvedic passages, therefore, indicate that Brahmanaspati was really the R̥gvedic equivalent of the pre-Vedic god 'Brahmā'.

According to the Purāṇas Brahmā first laid down the principles of 'Dharma' and 'Adharma' i.e. religious ideas. This was also the characteristic of god Brahmanaspati of the Veda. According to Roth (quoted in Muir's Sans. Texts, vol. V, p. 273) "Brahmanaspati is one of the divine beings who do not stand immediately within the circle of human life, but forms the transition from it to the moral life of the human spirit". Roth further shows that whereas the earliest Vedic gods are personifications of various departments of nature or of physical forces, this god is the product of moral ideas and impersonation of the power of devotion. "His entire character is such as does not belong to the earliest stage of the Vedic mythical creations, but points to a second shape which the religious consciousness endeavoured to take, without, however, being able actually to carry it fully into effect." Thus the characteristics of Brahmanaspati of the R̥gveda are found similar to those of Brahmā the god of religious consciousness.

Certain other characteristics of Brahmanaspati or Bṛihaspati are similar to those of Brahmā. He is called 'Śatapatra,

(Rv. VII. 97. 7) hundred-winged or better 'hundred-leaved.' Brahmanaspati was thus compared to a tree. We shall show below that Brahmā was also conceived as a tree. He is said to be carrying a golden spear (Rv. VII. 97. 7), a bow and arrows (II. 24. 8) and an iron axe (X. 53. 9) and sometimes a Vajra. He is described as the creator god, creator of gods and men (Rv. X. 72.). Brihaspati is said to make it possible for his associates "to behold the son of his son." (Rv. II. 3. 3). Thus reference to Brihaspati having power to help people in increasing their progeny reminds us of Brahmā's special relations with 'pitṛikārya' by doing which people give stability to their dynasties. Hence Brahmā's special name 'Pitāmaha' etc. Another hymn to Brahmanaspati refers also to the invocation to Marut, Indra, Varuna, Devī Sūnṛita, Priya Satyarūpa and 'Manoh-putri Ilā Suvirā.' The association of Brahmanaspati with the last three gods or goddesses clearly identify Brahmanaspati with the god Brahmā. According to the Matsya Purāṇa, Śatarūpā came out of the body of Brahmā and was also known as Gāyatri, Saraswati or Brahmānī. The association of Manu with Brahmā is well known. This R̥gvedic hymn thus indirectly refers to the genealogy of Brahmā and thus equals Brahmā with Brahmanaspati.

Brihaspati is also known as 'Saptagu' (Rv. X. 47) which is due to the fact that he is drawn by seven oxen. Similarly, Brihaspati had 'seven mouths' and 'seven rays' (Rv. IV. 50. 4). This relation of Brihaspati with the numeral 'Seven' shows his relation with the Saptarātra cult. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Gaṇapati is identified with Brahmā, Brahmanaspati or Brihaspati. Thus the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas identify Brahmanaspati and Brihaspati with Brahmā. 'Brahmā' as an epithet of these gods need not be taken as meaning 'a priest' but rather as showing that these Vedic gods were being eulogised by their comparison with god Brahmā. Thus 'Brahmā,' it appears, was not accepted as a god by the Vedic people but his equivalents were 'Brahmanaspati' or Brihaspati, A. Cornar-swamy also says that "In the Vedic period, Agni-Brihaspati

is Brahmā i.e. high priest of the Gods and so virtually the god Brahmā" (Zimmer—*Mythology in Indian Art and civilisation*, f. u p. 125).

Another difficulty in accepting the god Brahmā as a pre-Vedic god is the theory that the name 'Brahmā' was a later development of the neuter 'Brahman'; and hence god Brahmā arose after the Vedic period. Brahmā is thus known popularly as a Purāṇic and thereby a lately created god. The word Brahman in the R̥gveda has been explained by scholars to mean 'prayer', 'Holy writ' or 'Veda'. Keith is of opinion that there are further developments of this meaning. "It can mean spell", for prayer may be a spell and not real prayer, and if often means 'holy speech', the 'holy writ', the three-fold Vedas. But in many passages it seems as if 'Brahman' must be taken rather as 'holy power' than as 'prayer'. The gods are said to discuss the Brahman, and from it, it is clear that more than the mere word may be intended." According to him "prayer rapidly passes over to the lower rank" and spell gets superiority. In the Atharvaveda, the Brahman as the spell is the power to destroy evil. But even Keith concludes by saying that "the origin of the meaning of Brahman is uncertain". It has been shown that god Brahmā had in early times a special relation with a magic cult (See chapter I) or spells. This might have given rise to the word 'Brahman' from Brahmā. Many later Vedic passages also indicate that 'Brahman' as an abstract, referring to the 'God absolute' of the Upanishads, the formless Brahman, arose out of the word 'Brahman in the masculine i.e. God Brahmā. The Kena upanishad thus identifies the two. "That is Brahman, not what the people worship." Here the popular Brahman undoubtedly refers to Brahmā. Similarly, '*Brahman won a victory for the Dewas*' also refers to god Brahmā.

The Atharvaveda contains references to a god Brahman. Thus in a hymn (XXI. 43) addressed to Brahman, seven gods are invoked. The association of '7 Gods' with Brahman reminds us of the saptarātra cult of Brahmā. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (X. 2. 3. 1) clearly refers to Brahman as the first

creator and thus identifies Brahman with Brahṁā. There is therefore ample reason to hold that the word 'Brahman' of the Upanishads was a mere philosophisation of and therefore a later abstract form of the word 'Brahṁā'. So there is no reason to hold that in the Upanishadic period people knew only Brahman and not Brahṁā. Brahṁā as Prajāpati was the main god not only of the Brāhmaṇa period but also of the Upanishadic age. According to Keith, "It is of importance to note that in the Upanishads, where, if anywhere, the mention of Brahman as the creator god would be expected to be frequently found, it is comparatively rare and Prajāpati is the normal name of the creator and so in the Sūtra texts also" (Keith-Ibid p. 209 ff.). Thus the abstract 'Brahman' originated from the concrete Brahṁā. According to Macdonell 'the evolution of thought in the R̥gvedic period shows a tendency to advance from the concrete to the abstract.' The R̥gvedic 'Brahman', whatever might have been its meaning, may therefore be considered to have originated from the concrete 'Brahṁā'. The review of the Vedic period thus shows that even in the R̥gvedic period god Brahṁā might have existed in India.

The Atharvaveda also makes Prajāpati the supreme god. It further refers to Aṣṭakā as the daughter of Prajāpati. As shown before (Ch. 1), words Aṣṭāka, or Aṣṭakā had a special association with the Śrāddha cult and Brahṁā worship. Worship of Prajāpati was thus the same as that of Brahṁā.

In the Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhita (IV. 2. 12) Prajāpati's incest with his daughter Uṣas is mentioned. Uṣas changed herself into a gazelle and so prajāpati also became a deer. Rudra aimed an arrow at the deer, but was induced to lay it aside, on prajāpati promising to make Rudra the lord of beasts. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Rudra is said to have been produced by the angry gods from the most terrible substances and Rudra shoots an arrow at Prajāpati. This legend is vaguely referred to in the R̥gveda (X. 61. 5-9 X.116); but scholars (Keith) thinks that here the incest is ascribed to Dyaus with his daughter. The story is also known to the Purāṇas. Hence there is no reason to ascribe

of a god named Brahmā, or Brāhman or Prajāpati, besides that of other creator gods mentioned in the Vedas. Brāhmā need not be regarded as a god created by later Purāṇas. Keith also admits that god Brahman (or Brahmā) was apparently a great and popular god among Brahmins during the time of the Buddhist texts, but he is of opinion that "importance of the god Brahman can be shown only for a period during the development of Buddhism." This latter view of Keith cannot however be fully supported. Brahmā was a pre-Buddhistic and prevedic god.

The Buddhist Tevijja Suttā clearly refers to the worship of Brahmā, and its goal was the union with Brahmā. As Tevijja refers to the three Vedas, it may be concluded that at the time of the Buddha the religion of the Vedas was regarded by the Hindus as worship of Brahmā. This idea therefore must have arisen long before the rise of Buddhism. The Theragāthā contains names of Theras such as Brahmāli, Brahmaddatta etc. In the Assalayana Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya No. 93), the Brahmin Assvalayana claims "the Brahmins are the real sons of Brahmā, born from his mouth, sprung from Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā." This view is repeated in the Milindapanho. (IV. 5. 20) in which it is said "His father, mother were worshippers of Brahmā, reverers of Brahmā and harbouring the idea that Brāhmaṇas were highest and most honourable among men." Further we find (Milinda IV. 5. 37) "All men in those times with the ascetics and the monks, the wandering teachers and Brahmins were worshippers of Brahmā, reverers of Brahmā and placed their reliance on Brahmā." Though the Milinda is a later work, it contains the common tradition current in society at the time of the rise of Buddhism. In fact, when the Buddha visited Bodhgaya, the ascetics of that place, the Purana Jāṭilas, worshipped Indra and Brahmā (see Barua—Gaya and Bodhgaya).

In the Sela Sutta (Sutta Nipatā III. 7. 7) quoted in the Milinda (IV. 3. 33), the Buddha is said to have cried out, "I am a king, an incomparable Dharmarāja, with Dhamma

I turn the wheel, a wheel that is irresistible." The expression 'incomparable Dharmarāja' indicates the belief in the existence of other Dharmarājas in the country at that time. This god Dharma was closely associated with the Brahmā cult. Thus there is no doubt that a cult of Brahmā existed at least in eastern India when Buddhism arose. All legends of Buddhism refer to Brahmā's visits to the Buddha on many occasions. The Buddhists, however, made Brahmā, Indra and other Hindu gods of that time subordinate to the Buddha (See Chapter on Buddhism).

The Brahmā cult having been proved to have been existing in the earliest known periods of Indian history is curiously not directly mentioned in the Vedas. The reason was not that it did not exist, but that it was purposely suppressed by the Vedas. The Brāhmana and Pauranic tradition to the effect that Brahmā died after creation thus indicates that with the rise of the Vedic religion Brahmā's direct worship had ceased among the higher class people at least of the western parts of India. The great religious schism (referred to in the first chapter) divided the people of India into Vedic worshippers and Asura worshippers, of Vedic Gods with Indra at their head and worshippers of Brahmā's Rātras. Hence it is that the Vedas purposely did not mention the god Brahmā in their pantheon. But as time went on, the influence of the old cult changed the character of the Vedic religion. Again in later religious books, the Sūtras, the Purāṇas and other heterodox texts, references to Brahmā began to appear. The Vedic religion was not however a total departure from the old cult of Brahmā; the god was continued to be worshipped with new names—Prajāpati, Brahmanaspati, Brahman and such other names of creator gods, as found in the Vedas and Upanishads. The old cult evolved the Sāṃkhya and the new cult evolved the Vedānta (Upanishads); but other parts of India still clung to the old faith. The non-Vedic east continued to follow the old form of religion till the rise of Jainism and Buddhism out of the old cults.

According to other Indian traditions too, the Vedic cult arose

in the fourth birth of *Brahmā* (*Mahabharata* legend). The Vedic religion thus arose out of the *Rātra* cults. The *Brāhmānda Purāṇa* verse cited at the head of the present chapter also appears to contain genuine tradition about the history of evolution of the Indian religions. In this verse it is said "Brahmā was adorable in the Satya Yuga; in the Tretā Yuga 'sacrifice' is said to be so; in the Dvāpara Yuga, Vishnu was worshipped. I (i.e. Śiva, relator of the verse) am worshipped in all the four (yugas)." This verse thus indicates that the earliest religion consisted of *Brahmā* worship; then came sacrifice, the period of Vedic religion, then came the worship of Vishnu (as shown in the previous Chapter). It will be shown that the worship of Śiva was really associated with *Brahmā*'s and the Indus valley culture has also proved Śiva to be the oldest god of India. Śiva was worshipped in the form of Rudra in the period of sacrifice (Vedic period). Vishnu was not a prominent god in the Vedic period though worshipped. His religion got a wonderful impetus after it was mixed up with the cult of Vasudeva and after the rise of the *Bhāgavata* or *Pancharātra* religion by the suppression of the still existing *Rātra* cults of *Brahmā*. The absence of reference to *Brahmā* in the *Veda* need not therefore be taken as a proof of non-existence of his worship in the Vedic period. The *Vedas* do not really give us a full picture of the condition of India of that period, as has been now the accepted opinion of scholars. The *Vedas* made Indra the chief god; but the *Purāṇas* while depicting him as a lude and coward god perhaps indicate his earlier position.

The cult of *Brahmā* after its suppression by the Vedic religion was considered as a religion of the *Asuras*, as the *Brāhmaṇas* clearly refers to the *Asuras* having taken up the '*Rātras* of *Brahmā* and the gods having taken recourse to the *Divā* (gods). But the worship of *Brahmā* continued in society in various forms, some incorporated into the orthodox religions and others limited to low class peoples. The *Saptarātra* cult of *Brahmā* appears to have been popular in several regions such as Kurukshetra, Panchala, Banaras and eastern parts of India. The *Purāṇas*

though referring to Brahmā did not later on attach much importance to the deity. No particular sect of Brahmā is found existing in the historic period. Very few temples were erected for this god. Hindus worship the god in the Sandhyā rites, in marriage ceremony, in 'tarpāṇa' to forefathers and in the Śrāddha ceremony. But the Buddhist texts as quoted above indicate that the worship was popular in eastern India. In the Mahābhārata (Virāṭa Parva 13 (14) a Brahmotsava is said to have been performed in the fourth month of the year in the Matsya territory. In certain parts of Bengal (Nabadwipa etc.) Brahmā is still worshipped for seven days in the month of Bhādra, as a protection, it is said, against fire. That the Brahmā cult was mainly considered as a cult of the Asuras is evident from the fact that in the Purāṇas most of the daityas or Asuras are said to have achieved supernatural power by a boon from god Brahmā. The reason for the disappearance of the cult was undoubtedly the rivalry of the cult with the Vedic religion. But some Paurāṇic tradition attributes this to the incest of Brahmā with his daughter. According to the legend of the Lingodbhava mūrti of Śiva, Brahmā's worship was stopped owing to the curse of Śiva on Brahmā. These reasons however were fabrications of later periods. It is also likely that the Vṛātyas, Yatis and Munis of the Vedic period, known to be following a non-Vedic cult were really following a cult allied to that of Brahmā.

Non-sectarian works of later periods indicate the popularity or continuity of Brahmā's worship. Brahmā was the chief god worshipped during religious ceremonies performed at the time of building a house. In the Vāstumaṇḍala Brahmā occupies the central place according to all the vāstu-texts. The setting up of the Brahmaśilā is the first ceremony. In orientation of cities, Brahmā's temple was to be set up in the centre of cities (Agni Purāṇa 39. 10). The principal gate of the city was called the Brahmā gate (Arthaśāstra). Even in the Vedic period, the chief god related to house building was 'Vastoshpati'. This god is identified with Indra or Brahmanaspati. Brahmanaspati

indicate the various other gods who were associated with Brahmā—the worship of Brahmā also therefore included the worship of those gods or goddesses.

Two other early gods were associated with the Brahmā cult. The Taittiriya and Satapatha Brāhmaṇas identify Brahman with a god 'Ātman'. Keith is of opinion that the two expressions had by diverse ways come to be regarded as expressions for the same thing, but the history of Ātman suggests that it had from the first an independent existence. This Ātman was worshipped in the Upanishads and by the Jains not perhaps as mere abstractions but as definitely concrete gods.

The Bṛihad-Araṇyaka further refers to a god 'Satyam' connected with creation. This is also found as the name of a 'Vyūha' in the Pancharātra cult. "In the beginning, waters were this (universe); they produced Satyam, from this was produced Brahmā, from Brahmā Prajāpati, from Prajāpati the gods." Satyam is mentioned along with Rita in the R̥gveda but its divine character in the Vedas cannot be understood properly. The god was connected with the creation legend (cf. Aghamarshana hymns). According to scholiasts 'Satyam' means 'Panchabhūtam', which is the tanu of Brahmā or Rātras. Satya was one of the Vyūhas in the Vaikhānasa system. Satya was also included in the names of the Visvadeva gods, others being Vasu, Kratu, Daksha, Kāla, Kāma, Dhṛiti, Kuru, Pururavā and Mādrava. These names also indicate the relation of God Satya with Nārāyaṇa or Brahmā. The worship of god 'Satya-Nārāyaṇa is still very popular in India, and may be regarded as a survival of the ancient Brahmā cult in a Vaishṇava garb.

The association of Rudra with Brahmā has already been mentioned in the legends about Brahmā's incest. The Purāṇas also co-relate these two gods. Rudra was a mānasa son of Brahmā or arose from Brahmā's anger (Garuḍa Purāṇa 1.5.2). The Atharvaveda refers to Rudra residing in fire (Av. VII. 87), and when fire was identified with Prajāpati, Rudra and Prajāpati were closely co-related. Ahirbudhnya is identified with

fire in the Vēda, with one of the Rudras in the Purāṇas and with Prajāpati in the Aitarya Brāhmaṇa (3-36). He is one of the Pancharātra gods. In the Matsya Purāṇa (III. 39-40) it is said that after Brahmā's incest, Brahmā's fifth head became Jaṭila (matted) through shame. Brahmā is generally regarded to have four faces; and five faces are ascribed to Śiva. The Matsya Purāṇa ascribing five heads to Brahmā perhaps refers to a mixed form of Śiva—Brahmā. The story of Śiva's Brahma-Śiraśchedaka mūrti also refers of the Śiva's cutting off the fifth head of Brahmā. The Jaṭila Sanyāsis of Gaya of the time of the Buddha perhaps worshipped such a mixed form of Śiva-Brahmā. The figure at Bodhgaya of Dharmēśa or Champēśa of the Pala Period may also be that of a mixed god of this type. This association of Brahmā with Rudra-Śiva is echoed in the Gayāsūtra legend which refers to Brahmā's entering into a Linga; and at Gaya, Śiva is still worshipped in the name of Pitāmaheśvara, Prapitāmaheśvara etc. This relation will be further clarified from Brahmā's relations with Kāla and Dharma. This is, however, interesting to note that according to the Rīgveda 'Muni' was a non-sacrificing man who was a friend of Rudra with whom he drinks a potent draught. This 'muni' had long hair and wore yellow robes (RV. X. 136). Muni thus might have been a class of non-Vedic Sanyasi worshipping Rudra-Śiva.

Kāla was, according to Purāṇas, a god closely associated with creation and creation legends. Though references to him are scanty in the Rīgveda, he is regarded as a great god, equal to the creator, 'source and ruler of all things'. In the Atharva veda (XIX. 53 and 54) Kāla is described as riding on a chariot of one horse, "having seven rays and thousand eyes." This 'Time' moves also on seven wheels, he has seven naves and immortality is his axle. He is all the worlds at present and in future. He is the father of Prajāpati, Kāśyapa and holy Fire. The Maitrī Upanishad calls Kāla 'a form of Brahmā' (M. U. VI. 14. ff). Kāla is one of the Viśvadeva gods and a god of the Vaiśya caste (Bṛihad. Upanishad I.4. 12). The Matsya Purāṇa (154.13)

identifies Kāla with Brahṁā. The Vishṇu Purāṇa also regards Kāla as a supreme being. According to the Garuḍa Purāṇa (1. 1. 18) Kapila was an avatāra of Hari, who taught Sāṁkhya to Āsuri in order to save religion (Dharma) from the disorder created by Kāla. This shows that there was a religion of Kāla and to purify it, the Sāṁkhya Philosophy was preached by Kapila. It has been already suggested (Ch. 1) that the Sāṁkhya Philosophy was an attempt to philosophise the Brahṁā-Rātra Cult (related to the worship of Kāla). According to the Brahṁānda Purāṇa, there are five Kālas—Agni, Sūrya, Soma, Vāyu and Rudra; and Brahṁā is the lord of all Kālas. Kāla is a Chakra having four faces and ten tongues. Kāla is also identified with Rudra (Brahṁānda Pur. Ch. 23). In the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana Parva), Mṛityu declared Kāla to be regulating all nature, creatures and the world itself. Kāla is Parama Brahma (XII. 224). The Pancharātra Saṁhitas regard Kāla, along with Puruṣa and Prakṛiti, to have created the world. All these references indicate Kāla's relations with the numeral 'Seven', Brahṁā cult, creation and the Sāṁkhya philosophy.

The god Kāla in course of time was identified with god Dharma. He is described as a Chakra and so was Dharma. In the Garuḍa Purāṇa (1. 82. 6) Viṣṇu is called "Kāleśa" at Bodhgaya, but according to the Vāyupurāṇa, Viṣṇu is 'Dharmeshwara, of that place. This equates Kāla with Dharma. The reference in the Geetā (X. 30) to Kāla as the best of 'counters of numbers' (Kālayatām) perhaps indicates that Kāla was the god of the doctrine of numbers i.e. the Rātra cult. Another meaning of 'Kālayatām' being 'Vaśīkurvatām' may also refer to Kāla as a god of magical cults, as the Rātra cult really was. Kāla also became a form of Śiva according to the Brahṁānda Purāṇa. This association with Śiva is evident from a seal found at Bhita, of the 3rd-4th century A.D., in which Śiva is called 'Kāleśvara'. The continuity of the traditions of Kāla as a god is proved by the Viṣṇudharmottaram in which Kāla's image is described, and the description associates him with Dharma. His image might also be made in the form of

serpents and scorpions. According to the Buddhists the Nāgarāja was called 'Kāla'. Kāla is also regarded as 'Yama'. But all the references indicate that originally he was a god different from Yama. From the Vedic period to the Seventh Century, Kāla was worshipped as a god. He was most likely a pre-Vedic God related to the Brahmā cult.

Another Vedic god allied to Dharma was Kāma. The Atharvaveda invoked Kāma as a 'huli'. The Purāṇas make Kāma, a son of Dharma and grandson of Brahmā. According to the Atharvaveda again Kāma 'first of all came into being'. Thus he was almost identical with Brahmā. Further both 'Kāma' and 'Dharma' being bulls, are identified or closely associated. Kāma was converted by the Buddhists into Māra. Kāma was represented by the Buddhists as a 'pigeon'. Figures of pigeons are found depicted on the earliest Vajrāsana at Bodhgaya, along with those of swans, the symbol of Brahmā. Kāma was identified with 'Sāmha' (Krishṇa's son) and was once regarded as one of the Vyūhas of Vasudeva, but was later on rejected by the Pancharātra cult. The popularity of the Holi festival and its association with Krishṇa cult might have arisen from the fact that originally the Holi festival was one dedicated to Kāma (or Madana) as a god of the Rātra cult (a non-Vedic cult), and later on when Kāma was associated with Krishṇa's dynasty (Sāmha) the festival became a Vaishṇava one.

The Vedic gods 'Kāla' and 'Kāma' were thus related to another god Dharma who was also connected with the Brahmā cult. Scholars generally take God 'Dharma' as referring to the Buddha. But he was not so. Dharma was and is still worshipped as a god in Bengal. His worship gave rise to a big literature in Bengal. Prof. S. B. Das Gupta has discussed the nature of this god Dharma in some detail. But he has missed the real issue. He has shown from references in the Brāhmaṇas and Purāṇas that there was a god named Dharma in ancient India and that his cult in Bengal could not have been the product of only Buddhism, but was a mixture of various cults. Investigations

in Bihar have enabled me to find out that even now on the Yamadvitīyā day, in the district of Patna and Gayā a god called 'Dharmadeo' is worshipped by women and priests recite a Kathā. 'Kūśa' plants are planted on the courtyard and women offer worship there with vermillion and other things. I have already shown, in my book on the Bodhgaya temple, the relation of Dharma with god Brahmā whose worship was prevalent in the Gaya region even in the time of the Buddha. The revival of Dharma cult by Ramai Punditt in Bengal in the Pala period therefore appears to be a survival of the original Dharma cult of the Gaya region.

In the Ṛgveda (VIII. 35. 13) a god named Dharma associated with Mitra, Varuṇa and Maruts is invoked along with the Aswins. In the *Satapatha Brahmana* (13.4.3) Dharma is identified with Indra. It was natural for the Vedic people to accept this non-Vedic god and then identify him with their supreme god. The Buddhists often identified Dharma with Brahmā, as will be shown below. In the *Satapatha Brahmana*, Nārāyaṇa is described as the son of Dharma. The *Mahābhārata* also refers to Nārāyaṇa's birth in the family of Dharma (see Chapter 1). Yudhishtira is described as the son of Dharma. This Dharma, when he approached Kuntī, was 'Yogamūrti-dhara' (Adiparva 123-5). This shows Dharma's relation with Yoga. The Buddhist texts refer to the Devadhammaka sect i.e. worshippers of god Dharma. Worship of Dharma is mentioned in the *Samyuttara Nikāya* (138ff.—cf. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* ii. 20 ff). All these references clearly indicate that Dharma cannot be taken as equivalent to the Buddha. He was a pre-Buddhistic god, allied with Brahmā, Kāla etc.

The *Manu Samhitā* refers to gods Brahmā and Dharma (Manu XII. 50). The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* (1.4. 14) says that Brahman created Dharma. The *Mahānārāyaṇi Upanishad* (XXI. 6) refers to Dharma as a great god. According to the Jains Jina Dharmanātha was the son of the Sungod and Suvratā (as Yama was in the *Purāṇas*). Dharma is known as one of the *Avatāras* (twelfth) of Viṣṇu (*Abirbudhnya Samhitā*, *Bhagavata* etc.)

The *Bṛihatsaṁhita* (Cal. Edition, Chap. 99.1) refers to a god named Dharma or Dharmesa. The origin of Dharma from Brahmā is traced in the *Purāṇas*. He was Brahmā's son, or Nārāyaṇa was himself born as Dharma, or he was the son-in-law of Brahmā. Dharma's wife was Ahimsā. She bore him Hari, Krishṇa, Nara and Nārāyaṇa. (Mat. P. Chap 171, 172; *Vāmana Purāṇa*). Dharma is invoked in the Nanaghat inscription along with Prajāpati and other Hindu gods. The *Vishṇu-dharmottara* refers to his image as having four faces, four feet and four arms, with a white garment, and of white colour. In his right hand should be rosary and a book in the left. By his right side should be Vyavasāya in person and by the left Happiness very beautiful. The *Dhyāna* in the *Vratakhanda*, replaces Happiness by a beautiful bull. Dharma is popularly known as a bull in India (see below). The *dhyāna* makes him similar to Brahmā.

This god Dharma, as shown before, was related with Kāla and thus both the Gods became equivalent to Yama or Dharmarāja. In the *Skanda purāṇa* we find Dharma or Dharmarāja as identified with Yama, who propitiated Śiva and transformed himself into a bull to become Śiva's Vāhana. Yama is known as Rājā in the *Rigveda* (IX. 113) and the *Atharvaveda* (VI.123.5). 'Dharmarāja' therefore made Dharma equivalent to Yama. But Dharma as a Bull was different from Yama who rode on a buffalo. Jain genealogy of Dharmanātha, as will be shown below, also identified Dharma with Yama. Barua could not accept Dharma and Yama as identical, as was contended by O'mally, for the former thought that Yama was not a pre-Vedic deity. We have shown that Dharma was at one time a prevedic deity and later on identified with Yama. Dharmarāja or Yama was further associated with Śiva, as was Kāla (see above) and both Yama and Kāla's iconographic features were made similar to those of Śiva. This is borne out by a verse in the *Hayasirsa-panchārātram* (Chap. 27) where it is said. "(Dharmarāja) should be made similar to Bhairava in funeral places and forest tracts."

As 'Dharma' was later on identified with Yama, so was

Vajra. Māra (or Kāma) son of Brahmā had his weapon Vajra. Thus also was Vajrāsana a symbol of Dharma. In the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (Anandasarama Series Vol. III, p. 1168) it is said "Vajra is chakra". According to the Buddhists, Dharma was also the name of the seat of Indra. Thus Dharmachakra became the Vajrāsana. The Paurāṇic 'Dharmasilā' by which the Gayāsura was pressed by the gods was the same as the Vajrasilā or the Vajrāsana, or the symbol of god Dharma. The Asura religion was suppressed by a cult of Dharma and Brahmā. The Vajrāsana was Dharma and the tree was Brahmā (as the Purāṇas say).

Brahmā is also described as "One wheel" in the Atharva Veda (X. 8·4). Thus even according to Hindu traditions Brahmā and Dharma were allied deities. Kāla was one of the Rudras. So were Dharma and Śiva closely allied. Śiva was a yogin and so was Dharma 'yogamūrtidhara' in the Mahābhārata. The images of Śiva and Dharma as depicted in the Viṣṇu-dharmamottara were almost similar. Later on Dharma was also identified with Viṣṇu with chakra in hand. The Vajrāsana or the Dharmachakra was originally the symbol of Dharma of the Brahmā cult. Hence it is that the Vaiṣṇava pancharātra Saṁhitās definitely say that "the Sudarśana Chakra was Brahmā, the Kālachakra, the Jīna of the Jains, and Buddha of the Buddhists." We thus find why the Dharmachakra or the Vajrāsana was the symbol of the Buddha when the images of Buddha were not depicted in sculpture. Bodhgaya was thus a centre of Dharma-Brahmā cult and the Dharmachakra and Vajrāsana were adopted by the Buddhists from the worship of Dharma and Brahmā at Bodhgaya.

Dharma is known in the Mahābhārata to have assumed the form of a dog. Similarly the image of Vatuka Bhairava, a form of Śiva is always accompanied by a dog on his side. It is interesting to note that in Chotanagpur there is a festival in which a dog is worshipped. These might be survivals of the early relation of Śiva with Dharma.

Similarly Dharma is said to have assumed the form of a

Yaksha. Some of the Yakshas worshipped at the time of the Buddha were perhaps related to the Dharma cult or Brahmā worship. One was called 'Suchiloma' or boar. This might have been related to one of the earliest forms of Brahmā's avatāra as a boar (see below). Another Yaksha was called 'Khara' (an ass) and 'Gardhava' was also the name of another. 'Khara' in the Mahābhārata is known to have been a form of 'Bali' when he was living in secrecy after his discomfiture and Bali is said to have been at first a great favourite of Brahmā. Thus Yaksha worship appears to have been a form of Brahmā-Dharma cult in its latest phases. This is also apparent from the Kena Upanishad in which Brahman is called a Yaksha by the gods. Thus gods which were not known to the Vedic gods or people were styled Yakshas. Brahmā, Dharma etc. being outside the pale of Vedic pantheon might have been known as Yakshas. Brahmā worship and Yaksha worship were both limited to the lower stratum of society.

The Brahmā cult had also a close relation with that of the Earth Goddess. The three incarnations of Vishṇu—as Matsya, Kurma and Varāha—were originally avatāras of Brahmā Prajāpati (See below) and all these had been assumed in order to save the 'Earth'. As these avatāras are known in Vedic literature, the relation of Brahmā with the Earth goddess was a very ancient cult of India. As has been already shown, according to the Purāṇas, Brahmā arose out of Pṛithivī (Lotus or Rasā). The Purāṇas also make goddesses like Śrī, Lakshmi, etc. wives or daughters of Brahmā. If they were daughters, they were married to Dharma. The Mahābhārata relates that Śrī was at first residing with Asura Bali and the Daityas, but later on left them. Śrī thus describes himself as not subordinate to Vidhātā (Brahmā), but was under Kāla. Śrī was therefore associated with the Kāla or Dharma worship, before being taken up in the Brahmā cult. In Buddhist texts Śrī or Sirimā is a Yakshī. Śrī was identified with the consort of Vishṇu, Lakshmī, in Vaisṇavism; Śrī and Pṛithivī, as Vishṇu's wives were therefore depicted by the side of Vishṇu images. The Mahābhārata

(XII. 108) while describing efficacy of obedience to parents refers to Vasumatī along with Prajāpati and Brahmā. These goddesses were originally various forms of the mother Goddess of prehistoric period and associated with the Brahmā cult.

The worship of Dharma and Kāla (as Yama) along with Brahmā led to the relation of the Brahmā cult with ancestor worship — Tarpaṇa and Śrāddha. Brahmā's worship was the worship of Pitāmaha. The worship of the Pitṛins is traced in the Vedas. The gods associated with Pitṛins in the Vedas were Agni, Heaven, Earth and Yama. The 'Pitṛiyāna' is mentioned in the Vedas and Upanishads. Yama is invoked along with the Aṅgīrasas, Fathers, Navagvas in the Vedas (Rig. X. 14, Atharva XVIII, Niruktā V. 21). The relation of the Navagvas with these gods correlate these with the Rātra cults, as indicated in the last Chapter. A funeral hymn (AV. XVIII. 4) also associates Yama, Pitāmaha, Agni, Savitṛi and Pitṛins together. Pitṛkārya (worship of manes) means worship of the Vasus, Rudras and Ādityas (Manu III. 28; Mat. Pur. 19). The R̥gvedic funeral hymns are invocations to the Earth goddess and Yama. Brahmā's grand daughter Svadhā was married to the Pitṛins (Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇa). The origin of the Piṇdas as related in the Mahābhārata also indicates its relation with Brahmā. The relation of rātra cult with the Madhuvidyā and the importance of madhu in Śrāddha or Piṇdadāna have already been mentioned (Ch. 1). The rātra cult was a cult of Pitṛins according to the Brāhmaṇas.

The relation of Brahmā with ancestor worship is apparent from the Paurāṇic and present system of Tarpaṇa performed in honour of dead ancestors. The Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana; Cha. 9) relates that Svayambhū (i.e. Brahmā) established the custom of Śrāddha and nobody else can be the founder of this. The first mantra in connection with Tarpaṇa is "Brahmā tripyatām, Rudraṣtripyatām Prājapatistripyatām". Brahmā, Rudra and Prajāpati are thus correlated. The mantra of the manushya tarpaṇa as found in the Matsya Purāṇa (102. 17-19) clearly indicates the association of the ceremony with the Saptarātra

cult of Brahṁā. It runs as follows "Sanakāśca Sanandasca
trītiyaśca Sanātana/Kapila=ścāsurīścaiva Boḍḍhuh Pāncāśi-
khaśtathā Sarve té triptīm āyāntu etc." The first three names
are those of the mānasa sons of Brahṁā or Dharma, as found
in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, who attained Sambodhi.
The three latter names are in the great epic referred to as
those of Philosophers, the preceptors Pāncāśika. The Satapatha
Brahmana (II. 6. 1. 25) actually refers to the opinion of an
Āsuri in connection with a sacrifice to the manes. This Āsuri
and the one mentioned in the mantra may be identical per-
sonages. Kapila is the earliest Ṛishi according to the Svetā-
śvātara Upanishad (5.2). Kapila, Āsuri and Pāncāśikha are called
sons of Rudra in the Brahṁānda Purāṇa (Ch. 23). In place of
Boḍḍhu here is mentioned the name of one 'Vāḁkali', perhaps
same as the former. Kapila, Āsuri etc. are also known as the
famous promulgators of the Sāṁkhya system of philosophy. The
relation of these Sāṁkhya philosophers with Rudra, Brahṁā
and Tarpaṇa thus indicate the close relation of ancestor worship
with the Rātra cult of Brahṁā.

The mantra of Śrāddha ceremony also indicates the relation
of Dharma with ancestor worship. In offering the bull, it is
said "Oh bull, you are Dharma. You will report good and bad
deeds to Dharmarāja." The mantra differentiates Dharma from
Dharmarāja, which was also the original position as shown be-
fore. The relation of Dharma with the mantras of Śrāddha
perhaps led to the introduction of a mantra cited in Śrāddha
ceremony in which Yudhisthira, son of Dharma and his other
brothers are mentioned. The conversion of Brahṁā's Rātra
cult into a Vaiṣṇava cult perhaps led to the introduction of
Viṣṇu in the mantras of Śrāddha.

The Brahṁā cult may therefore be proved to have been
closely associated with the cults of Kāla, Kāma, Rudra, Dharma,
the Earth goddess, Śrāddha and other forms of ancestor worship,
Yakshas and such gods who, though prevalent in the Vedic
period, were not directly connected with or prominent in the
Vedas. They may therefore be regarded as inheritance of the

pre-Vedic religions. The Earth goddess cult has been traced at Mohenjodaro. The worship of Śiva was also a pre-historic cult. The Yoga system was also related to the rātra cult of Brahmā and Śiva; and its existence is also traced in the ancient Indus valley culture. The Rātra cult of Brahmā had a special relation with the theory of 'Janmāntara vāda' (metempsychosis) and according to certain scholars, this might also have existed in the Indus culture. It will be shown below that perhaps the worship of Brahmā and Kārtikeya also existed in that culture and there were images of these gods. The Mahābhārata (Santiparva 309) has a chapter on Buddha and Ahudha, which Bhishma says he learnt from Brahmā. It is therefore likely that the cult of Buddha (Buddhism) had a close relation with the Brahmā cult; in fact it will be shown that Jainism and Buddhism had originated from Brahmā worship.

It has been shown above that Dharma was worshipped in ancient stage in the form of a bull, a chakra and a Vajrāsana. His images were introduced in a late period (see his iconography in the Vishnu-dharmamottaram—above). Similarly Brahmā was not at first represented in his anthropomorphic form, but was worshipped through symbols. The idea of his four-faced image is to be found for the first time in an interpolated (according to Keith) verse in the Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhita. The Vedic Indians who had taken up the worship of Brahmā in a modified form worshipped him in the form of the sacrificial citi' (altar), as evident from the Brāhmaṇas (see Ch. I). Swan was a favourite symbol of Brahmā. Several animals like bull, lion etc. were also used to represent his symbols. A chariot or a pillar (Skambha Brahman) was also used as his symbol. They will be discussed later on.

One of the earliest symbol for Brahmā was perhaps the Aśvatthva tree, which was later on taken up by the Buddhists to represent the Buddha. In the R̥gveda (X. 81-82) it is said, "What was the tree out of which they fashioned heaven and earth?" The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa answers this query (Taitt. Br. II. 8. 9. 6) as, "Brahmā was the forest, Brahmā was that tree

out of which they fashioned Heaven and earth." The Atharvaveda relates (X. 7. 38), "Gods form part of the Skambha—Brahmā, as branches of a tree." The verse 21 in this connection is an obscure one. It runs thus "Aśachehhākham pratisthan-tim paramam iva janāh viduh uto san manyante' vare ye te sākham upāsate," It is likely that the first word here refers to the branches of the Asvatthva tree conceived as the Skambha Brahman. In the second part there is a reference to the smaller branches of the tree or smaller gods who, according to verse 38 formed part of the Skambha Brahman, the main tree. The 'tree' was the Brahman, its branches were the gods. The hymn thus refers to the superiority of worship of Brahman and inferiority of the worship of other gods. The Skambha Brahman was thus represented as the Aśvatthva tree. In another R̥gvedic hymn (X. 72. 3-4), "this and earth" are said to have sprung from "uttānāpadaḥ" which is explained by Wilson to mean 'upward growing' (tree). This verse has been taken by scholars to explain the significance of a scene found depicted on a seal from Mohenjodaro in which an Asvatthva plant is issuing out of the womb of a woman with stretched legs upwards (uttānā padaḥ), and with her head downward. The tree thus was a symbol of Brahman or creation. The R̥gveda refers to the Aśvatthva tree as the "boly fig tree" (R̥v. X. 97). Another verse relates "In the tree clothed with godly leaves where Yama drinketh with the gods, the father, the master of the house, tendeth with love our ancient sires." (R̥g X. 135). Here the Veda makes the tree the abode of Yama and the Pitriṃs. It is from this idea that the custom arose of offering piṇḍa at the foot of the Aśvatthva or Baṭa tree, as is done at Gayā and other sacred places. (See Tīrtha chapters in the Māhābharata). Thus tree is related to the ancestor worship allied to the Brahmanā cult. In the Atharvaveda (V. 3.6) we have an invocation to the Asvatthva tree for driving away and destruction of enemies. Another hymn (Av. V. 4. 3) says "In the third heaven above us stands the Asvatthva tree, the seat of gods." The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Brahman as a Palāsa tree (S. B. I. 3. 3. 19).

The Bṛihadāraṇyaka (III. 28) also clearly says that "Tree is puruṣha." The Bṛihadāraṇyaka upanishad also states, "The tree is identical with the lord of the forest, so is Puruṣha identical with truth. His hair is the leaves" etc. This also refers to the Aśvatthva tree. In the Śvetāśvatara upanishad (6. 6), a tree is said to have the form of Kāla (so Vṛkṣa Kālākṛtibhir) a god related to Brahmā, (cf. Śvet. Up. 3. 9 and Katha Up. 2.3.1). The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (IX. 110) represents Brahmā as living in a forest and being born as a tree. In the Matsya Purāṇa (Ch. 123 39-40) it is said that in the Pushkara dwipa there is a nyagrodha tree in form of a lotus which is worshipped as a part of Brahmā, and Brahmā Prajāpati lives there. In the Nudiah district of Bengal, a Brahmāṇi festival takes place in the month of Śrāvaṇ and an aśvatthva tree is the main object of worship on this occasion. Thus the sacred trees of the Indians were undoubtedly forms of Brahmā, (as both Brahmā and trees arise out of Prithivī) Kāla, Yama and the ancestors. Trees were also sacred to the ancient Indus valley people and figures of trees with or without gods under them have been found on seals discovered at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The Vāyupurāṇa thus represents the Bodhi tree as Brahmā and the Buddhists made it the symbol of the Buddha. Coomaraswamy also wrote "At a relatively early period the lotus may have represented Brahmā, for he is the successor of Prajāpati who is born of the waters" (Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art. p. 143).

The Avatāravāda of the Vaiṣṇava Pancharātra Bhāgavata sect was taken originally from the Brahmā cult. This must have originated from the Janmāntaravāda. With this is related the theory of the seven births of Brahmā, the various births (Jātakas) of the Buddha and the seven Buddhas. The theory was also known to the Jains and hence we find the twenty four Tīrthankaras. The avatāras of Viṣṇu arose out of the Avatāras of Brahmā. The Fish, Tortoise and Boar incarnations are referred to in the Vedic Literature as those of Prajāpati Brahmā. According to the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (VII. 5.1.5)), Prajāpati assumed the form of a tortoise and created

offsprings. The Mahābhārata in describing the 'Fish' incarnation says that the fish declared that he is Brahmā (Vana Parva Ch. 12). The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa knew the god Nārāyaṇa, but still instead of making the tortoise an avatāra of that god, ascribes the avatāra to Prajāpati. The Vajasaneyi Samhitā (37.5), the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (14. 1.2. 11), the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (1.1. 3. 5) refer to Prajāpati saving the earth or sacrifice by assuming the form of a boar. Sectarial Purāṇas like the Līṅga (I. 4. 5 9), the Brahmāṇḍa (Ch. 6) and Garuḍa (I. 4. 13) also support it. According to the Brahmāṇḍa, Brahmā took the form of Varāha named Dharma. In form it was a Yajnavarāha. Brahmā assumed this form to save Pṛithivī (Brah. P. Ch. 8). The Varāha then divided the earth into seven Dvīpas and seven Varshas. The Ramayana (quoted by Muir Sans. Texts Vol. IV. p. 33) also refers to Brahmā creating the world and assuming the form of a boar to raise up the earth. The name 'Vikhanas' of Brahmā had arisen out of this tradition. Thus the first three Avatāras are definitely known to be originally those of Brahmā. It is perhaps for this reason that in the Matsya Purāṇa (Ch. 47) version of the Avatāras, these three are not at all mentioned. The Matsya Purāṇa refers in place of these, to "three important avatāras of Vishnu" viz. (1) Nārāyaṇa from Dharma (2) Narasimha and (3) Vāmana. These three also are described in the Matsyapurāṇa in such a way as to clearly indicate their relations with the Brahmā cult. The Nārāyaṇa Avatāra is said to have arisen from Dharma and his priest was Brahmā himself. We have already shown the relation of Dharma with Nārāyaṇa and Brahmā. At the time of the Narasimha Avatāra, Rudra is said to have acted as priest. We have already seen that Rudra was more allied to Brahmā than to Vishṇu. In the Vāmana Avatāra Dharma himself was the priest, showing the association with Brahmā cult. Regarding the Vāmana Avatāra, the Mahābhārata (XII. 223 and 224) relates that Bali after his defeat was given special protection by Brahmā. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa too, Muir was astonished to notice that at the end of Bali's legend, Brahmā is made to appoint Bali a

ruler of the worlds. In the Taittiriya Samhitā (VI. 2. 42) Indra in the form of a jackal is said to have gone round the earth in three strides. The Atharvaveda (IX. 6. 29) speaks of the step of Prajāpati being imitated by his worshippers. The Ṛigveda of course, refers to the three steps of Viṣṇu, but does not refer to Bali. The 'three-stride' legends of different gods are thus noticed in the Vedic period. They might all have been taken from the Brahmā cult or the Dharma cult and the Mahābhārata indicates the confusion that was created by the attempt to suppress the truth about the Vāmana Avatāra. The Vāmana Avatāra depicts a struggle between the Cult of Brahmā followed by Bali and the Vaiṣṇava cult of a Vāmana.

The Narahari or Narasimha Avatāra, also related to the Dharma cult, arising out of a pillar, might have arisen from the Brahma—Skambha worship, and the double meaning of the word 'Hari' viz. the god Viṣṇu (originally perhaps, Brahmā) and lion. The Narasimha is mentioned in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka. The Paraśurāma Avatāra is difficult to be co-related either with Brahmā or Viṣṇu. Paraśurāma was a Brahmin and worshipper of Śiva. He fought with Kārtavīrya a worshipper of Dattātreya also recognised as a sub-Avatāra of Viṣṇu. Paraśurāma is also depicted as a great obedient son of his father and to have destroyed the Kshatriyas on account of their revolt against Brāhmaṇ. His worship of Śiva might give a true picture of his position amidst these puzzling legends. That he fought against kshatriyas who revolted against Brāhmaṇ showed his championship of Brahmā Cult. The Matsya Purāṇa also refers to Paraśurāma and other later mānushya avatāras of Viṣṇu, Ramchandra, Buddha and Kalkī along with Dattātreya, Māndhātā and Veda Vyāsa. Ramchandra was perhaps a follower of the Satya-dharma (not simply of truth, but of Satya as a god), which as shown before, was another religion related to the Brahmā cult. Even in the Vaishnava Agni Purāṇa (II. 11) it is said that Ramchandra then came to know "I am Brahmā."

The Matsyapurāṇa does not refer to Balarama at all. His other name Samkarṣana, as has been already shown, was

identified with that of Rudra in the Pancharātra texts. It has also been shown how this god was incorporated into Vaisṇava Vāsudeva cult. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also says that Rudra was looked upon as Halāyudha in one of his avatāras (Brahm. P. 23. 132). Thus Samkarshaṇa or Balarāma was more allied to Śiva or Rudra. The characteristics of these two gods agree in many respects. Rudra is regarded as a god of agriculture in the Vedas and so does Samkarshana's emblem 'Hala' indicate. Balarāma is associated with Nāga and so is Śiva. Both Rudra and Balarāma are known to have been great drunkards. The Mahābhārata also does not mention him as an avatāra, but refers to 'Sātvata' as an avatāra in his place. Samkarshaṇa was thus a god of the Rudra-Śiva cult and later on incorporated into Vāsudeva cult by identifying him with Kṛishṇa's brother Balarāma. Buddha, the last Avatāra, will be shown to be equivalent to Brahmā and later on identified with an avatāra of Vishnu (See chapter on Buddhism).

The Pancharātra Sāmhitas increased the number of Avatāras to twenty four. The Vyūhas were also made 24 in number. These twenty four Avatāras and Vyūhas gave rise to the theory of 24 Buddhas and 24 Tirthankaras. This number may be compared to that of the tattvas of the Sāṃkhya system. It is curious to note that the numerals (3+5+7+9) attached to the more prominent of the various Rātra cults give, if added, a total of 24. The Sudarśana Chakra had at first 12 spokes and later on 24. The Dharmachakra of Asoka found on the Sāmāth pillar has 24 spokes. These numbers thus indicate how the rātra cults of Brahma were really connected with a theory of numbers.

The Matsya Purāṇa version of the Avatāras also indicates an important matter in this connection. The Purana first says that there were three famous incarnations, and names three, though the names are not the usual ones. Then it refers to 7 other avatāras and thus the number is raised to ten, of which 9 are past and one a future Avatāra. According to the Buddhists also there were three Buddhas in one Kalpa, five in another Kalpa, seven most famous, and one of them Maitreya is the

future Buddha. This also shows an intimate relation of Buddhism with the Avatāravāda and Brahmā cult or the Rātra cults. The general belief that Avatāravāda was taken from Buddhism thus appears to be unwarranted.

The Brahmā cult therefore must have existed before the time of the Buddha. Many scholars believe that an attempt was made by the Brahmins to create a Brahmā cult between A.D. 200 and 500 (Farquhar—*Religious literature of India*; J. N. Banerjee—*Development of Hindu Iconography*). Zimmer was of opinion that the mythology of Brahmā developed during the period of the Brāhmaṇas (B. C. 1000 to 700) and the creation of the mythology presupposes the existence of the cult (*Mythology in Indian Art and civilisation*, f. n. p. 125). Indian traditions, however, indicate its existence in the pre-Vedic period.

In a recent article in the J. B. R. S. (Sept.-Dec. 1948 pp. 32 ff.) T. G. Aravamuthan discussed the iconography of several seals found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro in which there are:— a god within an Aśvatthya tree, another man kneeling in front of him, something like a human head kept near by, seven (in some seals, six) human figures (apparently women) standing below, and a Bull-goat man stands behind the kneeling figure. The author of the paper identifies the god within tree with 'Brahman,' the kneeling figure as Kārtikeya, the female figures as the Kṛittikās or the six mothers of Kārtikeya. The Bull-goat figure is identified with Agni, the father of Kārtikeya. The whole scene, according to the writer, is Brahman's revelation to Agni, Kṛittikās and Kārtikeya, as he did to the gods like Indra in the story in the Kena Upanishad ('Kena U. 3. 4).

This identification of the seals may be accepted with certain modifications and may prove the existence of Brahmā's Saptaśatru cult in the Indus valley culture. The Kṛittikās were originally seven in number as the author shows, but were also six in some texts. The figure within the tree cannot be Brahman, the Absolute formless one. It is the figure of the personal Brahmā whose association with the Aśvatthya has already been discussed. The prevalence of the worship of Kārtikeya in the Indus valley

is not improbable because of the existence of Yoga system therein and Kārtikeya is known as 'Yogīśvara' in the Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata Chapters on Kārtikeya's coronation refer to Brahmā's part in it. The same chapters refer to the Kṛttikās attending the coronation ceremony. The Ramāyaṇa (Adi Kanda 36, 37) also clearly shows the relation of Brahmā with the birth of Kārtikeya and his appointment as the commander-in-chief of the gods. Kārtikeya, the child, killed a demon and thus struck by this exploit, the gods appointed him as their commander. An image of the Gupta period at Mathura depicts the coronation of Kārtikeya by Brahmā and Śiva. It is very likely that the Mohenjodaro seals depict the scene of Kārtika's victory over the demon and offering of the demon's head to Brahmā, the greatest of the gods. It was on this occasion that Kārtikeya was coronated and hence we find the Kṛttikās and Kārtika's father in the scene. Kārtika is known to have been born of both Śiva and Agni. Śiva was represented as a Bull, and goat was the symbol of Agni. Hence Kārtika's father is depicted as a combined form (Bull goat) of Śiva and Agni. Aja or goat is also Śiva's emblem. Hence the composite figure may be Śiva only, as in the Mathura image. That Brahmā was connected with warfares is evident from the Kena Upanishad itself in which Brahman is said to have "won a victory." This Brahman, though written in neuter, cannot be an impersonal god, but refers to Brahmā. Similarly offering of 'Vali' by the gods to Brahman is known from the Taittiriya Upanishad (I. 5). Hence Kārtikeya brought the head offering to Brahmā.

Moreover, Kumāra, another name also for Kārtikeya, is regarded as the very first Avatāra in several Purāṇas (Bhāgavata and Garuḍa). These Avatāras have been shown to have been originally related to the Brahmā cult. In the Salya Parvan of the Mahābhārata, Kārtikeya is described as the eldest son of Brahmā. Kārtika is called Sikhivāhana (rider on peacock) and it has been shown that this word 'Sikhi' or 'Sikhandi.' etc. was peculiar to the Rātra cults of Brahmā. The Bull-goat form of Agni or Śiva as shown here may be explained by the fact that

the warriors of Kārtikeya are described as having composite forms, peculiar mixed heads and bodies (Mahābhārata, Salya P. 45 to 53). Thus all traditions about Kārtikeya indicate this scene in the Mohenjodaro seals to be related to the cult of Kārtikeya as the commander of the gods beaded by Brahmā. The writer of the paper by reference to the Kena Upanishad story identified Kārtikeya with Indra; but this appears to be baseless, for in no tradition Indra was ever the commander of the gods, but the king of gods. We have shown that Indra was not originally the king of gods, but he became so in the Vedic period by superseding Brahmā.

If the identifications indicated here be accepted, we find that in the Indus valley region, Brahmā was worshipped in his image form, whereas, as shown before, he was generally worshipped in symbols in later periods. This may be explained by the fact that in India worship of images went side by side with symbol worship. But in the case of Brahmā, images are found from only the Kushana period. It might be that the influence of the Upanishadic religion had made making the images of gods unpopular in India (or in some parts of India) from the late Vedic period to the time of the revival of image worship in India.

Thus the difficulty that scholars find in connecting the Indus valley religion with that of the later period, though they could trace the survival of the former into a still later age, may be to a certain extent removed if we assume the existence of the Brahmā religion in the pre-Vedic age. The existence of the Earth-goddess or Mothergoddess and Śiva cults in Mohenjodaro also is a further proof of the antiquity of the Brahmā cult.

The later Hindu Iconography indicates that Brahmā, Kāla, Dharma and several other associate gods were also worshipped in their image forms, and they were really interconnected. The Vishṇudharmottaram description of Brahmā refers to his chariot of seven swans (V. Dharm III. Ch. 44). Brahmā is identified with Purusha (Ibid Ch. 46). "Rigveda is his eastern face, Yajur the southern, Sāma the western and Atharvan the northern." The four quarters are his arms. The worlds movable and

immovable are sprung from water, and Brahman holds those—so the Kamaṇḍalu rests in his hand. Kāla is indicated in the hand by the rosary. The seven regions are the swans in the chariot. This description of Brahmā indicates his relations with Vedic Puruṣa and Kāla.

Similarly regarding the image of Saṁkarashṇa it is said (Ibid Ch. 47), "Know the ploughshare to be Kāla, and the pestle to be death and with these two, the Rudra—Saṁkarashṇa ploughs this Universe." Here also Kāla is associated with Saṁkarashṇa who, as in the Pancharātra texts, is identified with Rudra.

The Bull of Śiva is called (Ch. 48) divine Dharma of four feet. The image of Dharma (Ibid Ch. 77) shows him to be four-faced, four-footed and four-armed. In his right hand is rosary and in the left the book. "Kāla is traditionally known as the rosary and Veda the book. The four faces are Jajña, Satya, Tapas and Dāna. His fourteen wives, as in the Purāṇas are also mentioned.

Similarly, in the image of Yama, on his right hand should be Chitragupta and on his left "should be shown the terrific looking Kāla, holding a noose. Know Yama to be Saṁkarashṇa assuming a tāmasī body for the destruction of the people. The consort of Yama called 'Dhūmorṇā' is identified with Kālarātri (Ibid Ch. 51).

The wheel in the hand of Viṣṇu is called the Dharmachakra, Kālachakra and Bhāchakra (Zodiac) (Ibid Ch. 60). In describing the image of the Sun god (Ch. 67) it is said, "On the left of the god should be a lion standard." "The lion appearing on the flag is celebrated as Dharma in person." It has already been shown that Brahmā also is depicted in the form of a lion and so was Dharma too.

The elaborate mythology, the antiquity, the existence of cult objects and also the popularity of Brahmā-worship may be considered as strong factors for giving rise to a special sect of Brahmā worshippers. In India we had the Gānapatya, Saura, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava sects, but surely

not any sect of Brahmā is known to have ever existed. Certainly this was the condition in periods in which the history is known to us. But as shown already, Brahmā was a pre-Vedic deity and so were the rātra cults. His followers, if they formed any sect must have been extinct in India just as Buddhists are not found here today. They were perhaps the Brahmins. This theory requires a full reconsideration of the origin of the Varṇas.

The existence of the Varṇa system may be traced in the earliest known periods of Indian history. "The quadruple division of society is mentioned in some of the earlier hymns of the *Rigveda*" (*Advanced History of India*). Different theories were propounded to discover the factors that led to this division. R. P. Chanda thought that this division was based on fundamental cultural distinctions and that the Kshatriyas were the rulers of India before the conquest of the place by the Aryans. The Aryan priests were called Brāhmins and the ancient rulers Kshatriyas. According to a recent theory "The Aryan invaders simply crystallised and perpetuated a system which was already in existence and was based on the taboo arising from magical ideas of the Proto-Australoid and Austro-Asiatic inhabitants of pre-Dravidian India" (*Advanced History of India*). This theory is also based on still unknown ethnological problems of India.

The most popular theory, however, of the origin of the Varṇa system is that it arose in a late Vedic period out of the occupations of different people, the priests becoming Brahmins, the warriors and kings being Kshatriyas and the cultivators and merchants became Vaiśyas. The conquered non-Aryans who were of a different body-colour were relegated to the Śudra Varṇa. But this theory has been criticised by eminent Vedic scholars. According to Keith "We have no ground to suppose that there was a special class which reserved its energies for war alone and that the Industrial population and agriculturists allowed the fate of their tribe to be decided by contests between the warrior bands. But the *Rigveda* certainly knows of a ruling class, the Kshatriya, and the Vedic kingship was normally hereditary" (*Cambridge History of India, Vol. I*). Such clearcut division of work was

not possible in practice, not only in the early Vedic but also in later periods. The system of Varna, therefore, could not have been based on occupation in the primary stage, though in a later period, at least before Megasthenes, occupations were determined by the caste of the people. The sayings of the Geeta that "I have created the four Varnas on the basis of 'Guṇa' and 'Karma'" refers certainly to divine creation and "Guṇa and Karma" here refer to the actions and qualifications acquired by a man in his previous births. Man is born in the different family of different castes according to his actions in previous births. It is not possible to determine the castes of people according to their actions in this birth. The system would have been a failure if ever such an attempt was made in society. The caste or the Varna system was hereditary even in the Vedic period, but rigidity of occupation was a later growth.

Even in the R̥gvedic period, families were not wedded to a particular profession. The R̥gvedic ṛishis also prayed for cattle and riches and material prosperity. In the Yajurveda we hear of "rich Śūdras" which indicates that they were not slaves but earning money by various methods.

Coming to the Sutra period, when caste system is supposed by all scholars to have already originated, we find that the Śūdras had become merchants and exercised trade. Thus in the Sutra period, the occupations of Vaiśyas and Śūdras had not been made exclusive. The Manu Samhitā is supposed to contain all the 'Brahmanical pretensions' and to have rigidly fixed the occupations of the different castes. But this idea is also wrong. In the first Chapter, the Samhitā refers to the 'Karmas' of the various castes and the Karma of the Śūdras is described as service of the three higher classes. But it appears that here the word 'Karma' does not mean 'occupation' but 'duty'. For if the word 'Karma' is taken in the sense of occupation, the regulations in the same Samhitā in the Fourth Chapter become meaningless. In that chapter are described the occupations of the Gṛihasthas of the 'Dvija' group i.e. the three higher classes in ordinary times (not in the āpadkāla, or emergent cases). Here

we find that the occupation of a dvija (including Brahmins) having a big family is prescribed as collection of food-grains from the fields, gifts received without asking, begging, agriculture, trade and money lending. This regulation thus clearly shows that the usual practice in society of the higher castes was to earn livelihood by all the occupations mentioned above. This shows that in spite of the rigid caste system, the occupation of the three higher castes were not exclusive at all. The Brahmins also must have carried on trade and agriculture. That this meaning of Manu's regulations was really current in society is apparent from the *Sukran̥tisūtra* (IV. 3. 19-21). The *Sukran̥ti* also distinguishes between 'Karma' (or Dharma) of the four castes and their 'Bhṛitivr̥tti' or 'means of livelihood'. Thus 'Karma' was not occupation; it was 'Bhṛitivr̥tti' which was really occupation. The *Sukran̥ti* also clearly says that sages like Manu and others also prescribe 'tilling' as the 'Vṛtti' or occupation of the Brahmins and that 'begging' was not to be followed by anybody except Brahmins. Thus what is popularly known as the occupation of the four castes was not really occupation. Occupations were quite different from the 'Karmas'. It may be mentioned here that Manu's regulations clearly explain why in the early Jāṭaka stories we find innumerable Brahmins tilling their lands.

The *Arthashastra* also refers to the 'Dharma' of the four castes. There the Dharma of the Vaiśyas includes tending of cattle, agriculture and trade; and that of the Śūdras is, besides serving the four castes, Vārtā (i.e. cattle breeding, agriculture and trade—*Arthasāstra* Sans. text pp. 6-7), Kāru (work of artisans) and work of minstrels. The *Arthasāstra* regulations thus show that the occupation of the Śūdras was never slavery or working as servants of the three higher castes. The *Manu Samhitā* (Ch. X.99) also does not forbid the work of artisans and artists for the Śūdras. In fact, it is clear that the occupations of the Śūdras were not much different from those of the Vaiśyas, except that Śūdras were not to study and sacrifice (which are not really occupations). These regulations also explain why in the later Vedic period we hear of rich Śūdras. Thus the popular idea about the

occupations of the four castes appears to have no foundation at all, either in theory or practice. The *Manu Samhitā* regulations in the First Chapter do not therefore refer to the occupations of the four castes but to their duties or 'Dharma' as the *Arthaśāstra* describes it to be.

The *Arthaśāstra* further shows how various Industrial groups, though placed in various subcastes, were really occupying the *Varṇa* of the *Vaiśyas* or *Śūdras*, for trade and the arts could be followed by both the *Śūdras* and the *Vaiśyas*. The occupation of Brahmins and *Kshatriyas* also were not as exclusive as we think them to be. The *Arthaśāstra* clearly refers to armies composed of Brahmins, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras*. This is also hinted by a verse in the *Śukranīti* (IV. 7. 388-J. Vidyasagara Edition). Thus it is not a fact that in ancient India it is only the *Kshatriyas* who fought and not other castes. The *Mahābhārata* heroes *Dronāchārya* etc. were not aberrations. The *Mahābhārata* further enjoins that the king should appoint his councilors from all the castes. The village officers, according to the *Āpastamba Sūtra*, were to be appointed from the three higher castes. So *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* also were working in the government of the country. Thus the occupations or means of livelihood of the people were never exclusive according to the caste system. But even then a hereditary *Varṇa* system existed from even the Vedic period, and interchange of *Varṇa* was scarcely allowed. Occupation, therefore, cannot be regarded as being the basis of the *Varṇa* system.

It has been suggested before that the Vedas mention the worship of many gods of different localities. All these gods could not have been worshipped by all the people at the same period. Many of the *Ṛigvedic* gods might have been incorporated in the Veda from among the then existing tribes or groups worshipping some particular gods. Some particular gods might have been worshipped by particular tribes or groups or localities. Thus *Prajāpati* was incorporated in the Vedic pantheon in the *Brāhmaṇa* period, but his name '*Brahmā*' was not accepted by the *Ṛigveda*. The followers of the *rātra* cults worshipped some

gods mentioned in the Veda, but Indra was not their chief god. The Vedas, when finally completed, had incorporated all these gods. Some of the pre-Vedic gods might not have been incorporated at all—such as the gods of the Śiśnadeva and the Mura-devas. Thus at the time of the rise of the Vedic cult or even in pre-Vedic period, there might have been people who worshipped a particular god or a group of gods and thus formed a sect among themselves. Other groups worshipping other gods might have formed separate and exclusive sects. Those who worshipped a particular group of gods might call themselves Brahmins, worshippers of other gods might be the Kshatriyas and similar other religious groups might be known as Vaiśyas or Śūdras.

Thus it may be that the Varṇas arose out of the difference of the pre-Vedic people regarding the god or gods they worshipped—or, more popularly, we may say the Varṇas were the names of the different sects of India in the pre-Vedic period. There are good reasons to support this theory. In the Puranas, it is said that Brahmā fixed the Brahmāloka for Brahmins, Indraloka for the Kshatriyas, Vāyūloka for the Vaiśyas and the Gandharvaloka for the Śūdras. From this it may be inferred that the Brahmins were originally worshippers of Brahman or Brahmā, Kshatriyas of Indra, Vaiśyas of Vāyū and the Śūdras of the Gandharvas. Several Vedic texts also indicate that Indra was the special deity of the Kshatriyas. During a particular sacrifice, a kshatriya became (temporarily) a Brāhmaṇa, and after the ceremony is over, the Kshatriya says, “with luster, strength etc., I return to Indra as my god” (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa I. 1. 9). This passage also indicates that Indra was the special and favourite god of a Kshatriya. Indra was considered as the guardian deity of Buddha who was a Kshatriya. The word ‘Brāhmaṇa’ has been derived by Scholars from ‘Brahman’ which they explain as a priest. But as I have shown before, the two words ‘Brahman’ and ‘Brahmā’ were identical. The Brāhmaṇa caste must have a close relation with Brahmā as a god. This is evident from early Buddhist texts, already referred to, in which Brāhmīns are said to have claimed that they were ‘real sons of Brahmā, worshippers of Brahmā, heirs

of Brahmā' and so on (see above). This especial relation of the Brahmin caste with Brahmā is also known from the tradition recorded in the Bṛihat Saṁhitā (60. 19 Cal. edition and also Bancrjee—Development of Hindu Iconography). Barahamihira therein refers to various gods specially to be worshipped by different sects and in this list Brahmins are enjoined to worship Brahmā. As the Vedas rejected Brahmā and set up Agni and Brahmanaspati (Bṛhaspati) in his place, these two gods were identified with Brahmā. The above mentioned traditions clearly indicate that here Brahmā refers to the god of that name and not merely to a priest. Thus Brahmins might originally have been worshippers of the pre-Vedic Brahmā.

Thus the Kshatriyas were originally worshippers of Indra and Brahmins were those of Brahmā. This is further evident from the fact that many later Vedic texts divide the gods also according to their castes, because, perhaps, the caste of the gods was determined by the castes of the sects who worshipped them. Agni and Bṛhaspati are called Brahmin gods (as shown above, the Vedic Brahmins gave up the worship of Brahmā and set up Agni and Brahmanaspati or Bṛhaspati and identified them with Brahmā), Indra is called (along with Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama and Mṛtyu) a Kshatriya god, Maruts (i.e. Vāyū, as in Purāṇas) and Viśvadevas are called Vaiśya gods, and Pushan (who is identified with the Earth) is called a Śūdra god (Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad I. 4. 11-13). These castes of Brahmā and Indra thus substantiate what we know from Puraṇic, Buddhist and Vedic texts about the special divinity worshipped by the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Bhū Devī (Earth goddess) is also known as a special divinity of the Vaiśyas (Matsya Purāṇa Ch. 154. Verse 77).

Thus it is evident that the castes had originated in the pre-Vedic period, different sects being grouped as different Varṇas. In the Vedic period all these gods and sects were taken into a common homogeneous fold. The Vedic religion gave a new form to the worship of Brahmā by introducing sacrifices and also perhaps a new turn to the caste system.

A passage in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VII. 19) refers to a legend in which 'sacrifice' is said to have fled from the Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras and approached the Brāhmaṇas. This legend perhaps indicates that the system of sacrifice was first current among the Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras and not among the Brāhmins who were worshippers of Brahmā and not of Indra and other gods of the lower castes. The legend refers thus to the first acceptance of sacrificial cult by the Brahmins (in an age which we call the Vedic period), after giving up the worship of Brahmā. Thus in the Vedic period all castes began to perform sacrifices. All sects were also then taken into the fold of the Vedic religion, and a new colour was then given to the caste system.

The original division of the people into four main sects gave rise to the four Varṇas and hence we find the division of Indians into four classes even in the early Vedic period. Though the rigidity and exclusiveness of occupations of the castes might have been a later growth, a germ of this might have existed even in the pre-Vedic period. Even now we find that men following particular occupations, or of particular caste, worship a particular god. The Kāyasthas worship 'Chitrāgupta' as their principal god, the carpenters worship 'Viśvakarmā' and the merchant princes of India are mostly Jains. Similarly it may be argued that the Brahmins, who in the pre-Vedic period were worshipping Brahmā, were very holy people devoted to religious duties and hence when they came within the Vedic fold they were specially selected by all as their priests. The Kshatriyas were rulers and worshipped a god of war (Indra) befitting their occupation, and the traditions of their occupations survived till the later periods. The gods which were being followed by the merchant classes of India were grouped together under the name of Viśvadeva gods or the 49 Maruts; and the merchants continued to worship those gods and to follow their old occupations. It was perhaps in this way that particular occupations were thus traditionally associated with particular castes. There was, however, no restriction or rigid exclusiveness of occupation; but the old

traditional occupations were recorded as the ideal duties or Dharma (not occupation) of the various castes and not as real means of livelihood.

The god of the Kshatriyas was not Indra alone, as shown above. Indra was perhaps the god of the predominant ruler of that period of a particular locality; but the other gods worshipped by the rulers of other places of India were, when incorporated in the Vedas, placed on a same level with Indra and became the gods of Kshatriyas. The gods of merchants of all places of India who had accepted the Vedic religion were thus called Maruts or Viśvadevas (gods of Vis or merchants). The worshippers of Brahmā were perhaps then limited to a small place and hence their gods after acceptance of Vedic faith became only two in number (Bṛhaspati or Brahmanaspati and Agni). The worshippers of the Earthgoddess and Gandharvas were perhaps the low class people and hence they were given the lowest position in the society as Śūdras. Their god Pushan also was not a prominent god, as only eight hymns are dedicated to him in the R̥gveda.

The popular view that the Śūdras were the dāsas (slaves) and non-Aryan aborigines does not appear to be based on facts. Dāsa in the R̥gveda not only meant 'a slave' but also perhaps referred to a tribe who had not accepted the Vedic religion. The Vedic gods fought with the Dāsas and Dasyus and killed them. There is no evidence to show that these non-Vedic tribes when defeated by the Vedic gods were turned into their slaves. There was a 'Dasyu' Varna, but 'Dasyu' did not get a place among the 'Varṇas' of India. If these were really made slaves, they might have been placed in a 'Dāsa' or 'Dasyu' varṇa and not in the 'Śūdra' Varna. There is no similarity of the word 'Dāsa' with 'Śūdra' except at the present day. The 'Dāsa' tribe might have been enslaved and might give rise to the meaning of 'dāsa' as slave, but there is no evidence to show that 'Dāsa' or slave gave rise to the word 'Śūdra'. Moreover it has been shown that Śūdras were never really servants or slaves by occupation. 'Service to higher castes' was their duty and it did not

also accepted Brahmā worship, however, made Brahmā the son of Prajāpati. Hence it is that we get both these traditions in the religious texts. As Brahmā was converted into Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati by the orthodox followers of the Vedas, so perhaps was non-Vedic and pre-Vedic Śiva adopted by the Vedic people as Rudra. Neither Brahmā nor Śiva may thus be regarded as later gods, created by the Purāṇas. Śiva's worship has been traced in the Indus valley and so perhaps may the Brahmā cult also have existed there. Though the Vedas attempted to recast the cult, its existence continued even in later periods and it exerted a tremendous influence on all religious sects. Hence it is that all religious sects of India ascribe creation to Brahmā and even sectarian works refer to the creation legends being associated with Brahmā. In fact, all known religious sects attempted to give authority to their religion and religious books by referring their origin to Brahmā the earliest god of India.

Similarly Śrāddha (ancestorworship) which was a cardinal matter in the worship of Brahmā was and is still followed by all Indian sects. The Vedic sacrifices are said to have originated for keeping alive Brahmā. Vedas came out of Brahmā's mouth. The God Absolute of the Upanishads was given a name which was only an abstract form of the name of Brahmā. God of sacrifice (identified with Brahmā) was Brahmanaspati. Even in the Buddhist period, people believed that the Vedas inculcated the worship of Brahmā. Jains and Buddhists showed honour and respect to Brahmā. It will be shown below that the theory of the Jain Tīrthankaras had its origin from the Brahmā cult. Buddha had also taken the position of Brahmā. In fact Gotama became the Buddha after performing a 'pitrīkārya' as will be shown in the next chapter. The Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇava Pancharātra cult regarded Brahmā as a Vyūha of Vāsudeva. The Tantrikas regarded their Śakti-goddess as nothing but the māyā of Brahmā. The Sauras also regarded the Sun-god as Prajāpati, as even the Vedic texts indicate. Gaṇapati of the Gaṇapatya sect was also Brahmā (as in the *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa*). Brahmā's Avatāras were ascribed to Viṣṇu

manners (Memo A. S. I.). All these differences existed in Pre-Vedic days and some might have survived later. This rivalry between these two Varnas made the Brahmins angry with the Kshatriyas when they tried to forcibly take away the girls of the Brāhmins. After all these sects had accepted the Vedic religion, perhaps a rapprochement was brought about between these people regarding the marriage problem. It was perhaps due to this agreement that a rule was made to the effect that lower castes men would not be allowed to marry a higher caste girl, but marrying a girl of the lower caste was not prohibited in early days. Anuloma marriage was allowed but not the Pratiloma. This curious rule about intermarriage between various castes can only be explained by reference to the existence of an earlier rivalry between the two higher sects and a later rapprochement to this effect.

Indian traditions of all periods thus indicate that the Varnas arose out of the pre-Vedic religious differences of the Indians and the great religious schism between the followers of the Brahmā cult and the Vedic cult. The Bramins were originally the followers of the Brahmā cult, but after the great schism, Brahmā cult was given up by most of the people of the higher class who became followers of the Vedic religion; Brahmā worshippers were then called Asuras. Thus did the cult and sect of Brahmā disappear as the main religion of India, at least of the western parts. In eastern parts Brahmā cult survived and hence the easterners were called Asuras even in the Brāhmaṇas.

The evidences of the existence of a real cult of Brahmā in a very early period thus make it clear that absence of references in the Vedas to this god was not due to its non-existence but perhaps due to its non-Vedic or pre-Vedic character. It was Brahmā who, as gradually there was intermingling of the Vedic and non-Vedic people in various parts of India, was also worshipped by the Vedic people of a later period (i.e. Brāhmaṇa period) as Prajāpati. Hence Prajāpati being a later growth was regarded as different from and son of Brahmā. Those who worshipped Prajāpati (adherents of Vedic faith) first and then

also accepted Brahmā worship, however, made Brahmā the son of Prajāpati. Hence it is that we get both these traditions in the religious texts. As Brahmā was converted into Bṛihaspati or Brahmaṇaspati by the orthodox followers of the Vedas, so perhaps was non-Vedic and pre-Vedic Śiva adopted by the Vedic people as Rudra. Neither Brahmā nor Śiva may thus be regarded as later gods, created by the Purāṇas. Śiva's worship has been traced in the Indus valley and so perhaps may the Brahmā cult also have existed there. Though the Vedas attempted to reorient the cult, its existence continued even in later periods and it exerted a tremendous influence on all religious sects. Hence it is that all religious sects of India ascribe creation to Brahmā and even sectarian works refer to the creation legends being associated with Brahmā. In fact, all known religious sects attempted to give authority to their religion and religious books by referring their origin to Brahmā the earliest god of India.

Similarly Śrāddha (ancestorworship) which was a cardinal matter in the worship of Brahmā was and is still followed by all Indian sects. The Vedic sacrifices are said to have originated for keeping alive Brahmā. Vedas came out of Brahmā's mouth. The God Absolute of the Upanishads was given a name which was only an abstract form of the name of Brahmā. God of sacrifice (identified with Brahmā) was Brahmaṇaspati. Even in the Buddhist period, people believed that the Vedas inculcated the worship of Brahmā. Jains and Buddhists showed honour and respect to Brahmā. It will be shown below that the theory of the Jain Tirthankaras had its origin from the Brahmā cult. Buddha had also taken the position of Brahmā. In fact Gotama became the Buddha after performing a 'pitṛkārya' as will be shown in the next chapter. The Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇava Pancharātra cult regarded Brahmā as a Vyūha of Vāsudeva. The Tantrikas regarded their Śakti-goddess as nothing but the māyā of Brahmā. The Sauras also regarded the Sungod as Prajāpati, as even the Vedic texts indicate. Gaṇapati of the Gaṇapatya sect was also Brahmā (as in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa). Brahmā's Avatāras were ascribed to Viṣṇu

CHAPTER 3

BRAHMĀ CULT AND JAINISM

It has been suggested in previous chapters that the Brahmā cult and the Rātra cults were suppressed in Western India as the result of the rise of the Vedic religion and the Vaiṣṇava Pañcharātra religion. It however continued in the eastern parts of India till at least the time of Mahavira and the Buddha, the historical founders of Jainism and Buddhism. This will be apparent from the similarity of these two religions with the Rātra cults of Brahmā. As Jainism of Mahavira is generally regarded by scholars to have arisen a short time before Buddhism, Jainism will be first discussed in this Chapter.

Mahavira is known to have been born in the Licchavi territory (Vaishali) in the sixth century B. C. The Licchavi Republic is said to have been governed by 7707 kings and Viceroys and other officers of the same number. Its three districts had houses numbering 7000, 14000 and 21000 respectively. It had 7707 storeyed buildings, 7707 pinnaled houses, 7707 Ārāmas and lotus ponds also of the same number. The criminals were tried by seven courts, one after another. Thus the Licchavis had a special liking for the number 'seven'. The origin of this may be explained only by reference to the Saptarātra cult, as has been discussed before.

The age in which Mahavira and Pārsvanātha were born has been regarded by scholars as the age of the Upanishads. Philosophical speculations had grown up in Videha and surrounding districts. Jainism like all other religions had a philosophical and a ritualistic aspect. The Jain philosophy with its peculiar technical names is still a puzzle to scholars, and its origin is shrouded in mystery. This philosophy therefore could not have been the work of a single personage and must have developed during several centuries. But at the same time, we cannot but find in this some influence of the Upanishadic

philosophy. The Idea of Paramātman, the main factor of Jain doctrine, might have been a development of the worship of god Ātman which has been referred to before, and the philosophy of Ātman as elaborated in the Upanishads. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to two kinds of sacrificers—the ātmayājins and Devayājins (S. B. XI. 2. 6. 13). These ātmayājins were perhaps worshippers of ātman, a non-Vedic sect; and the Vedic-people were the Devayājins. This ātman was perhaps a form of Brahmā, for ātman was identified with Brahman. (see before).

The Muṇḍaka Upanishad of the Atharvaveda had some affinity with the Jain doctrines. This Upanishad was to be studied by Sannyasis and is said to have been first taught by Brahmā to Atharvan, his eldest son. Atharvan taught it to Aṅgīrasa. Thus the Muṇḍaka Upanishad must have a close relation with the cult of Brahmā. This Upanishad gives much stress on Sanyāsa, the 'guru', worship of Brahman, of fire, Sun and seven Prāṇas. This further refers for the first time to the names of seven tongues of fire (see before) which became names of the Sakti goddesses. It may be that the Upanishad was really giving a philosophical interpretation to already existing popular goddesses of Tantric nature. The existence of Tantric doctrines at the time of the Buddha (and so of Mahavira too) has been discussed by many scholars (C. Chakravarty in Indian historical quarterly 1930 p. 122). The Jain texts also refer to many tāntric practices and a Mahākālī (K. P. Mitra in Ind. Hist. Quarterly 1939). Hertel has found similarities of the Muṇḍaka Upanishad with Jain views and Keith also admits that this Upanishad cannot be posterior to Jainism (Keith—Ibid p. 503). Jainism also gives much stress on Sannyāsa. Thus Jainism may be co-related to the numeral '7' and the cult of Brahmā.

The Jain religion as the result of its contact with the Licchavis and the Muṇḍaka Upanishad, thus favoured the numeral 'seven' of the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā and also the Navarātra cult which, as shown before, had a tantric aspect. Hence arose the doctrine of seven Jainas or Tīrthāṅkaras, which later on were.

increased to 24 in number. Similarly according to Jains, there were 9 Vāsudevas, 9 Baladevas and 9 Nāradas and 9 Prativāsudevas, the number nine being borrowed from the Navarātra cult. The number of these Salākāpuruṣas was 63 (7×9). The Jains also regard 11 Rudras, 24 Kāmadevas, 24 Fathers and 24 Mothers. This number '24' as shown before was the total of the Trirātra, Panchrātra, Saptarātra and Navarātra numerals. The 'Mothers' were also known to Jains due to the influence of the Mothers of the Navarātra and other Rātra doctrines. Gods Rudra, Kāma, and Fathers are especially related to the Brahmā cult.

The Jain religious mythology and conception of ages attribute absurd number of years to various ages or events. It has been said already that such ideas of the 'Ages' extending over such long periods were peculiar to the Rātra cults and arose out of the doctrines of a god 'Kāla' and meaning of the word as 'time'. Time is infinite, the numbers were also infinite. The Jains also had a Dharmachakra, which they carried in front of their processions. (Jaini—Manual of Jainism—p. 130). This Dharmachakra was the Kālachakra and so according to the Pancharātra texts, the Sudarāṣana was Jina to the Jains. These clearly indicate the relations of Jainism with the Rātra cults.

It was perhaps the association of Jainism with the numeral '9' of the Navarātra cult of the 'Mothers' that led to Mahavīra's symbol being 'Llon', which was associated with Durgā in the Navarātra cult. The cult of 'mothers' was known to the Jains and to the Rātra cults as well (see Ch. 1).

So long it has been shown that the cult of Mahavīra i.e. Jainism, as known today, has a close relation with the Rātra cults. But Mahavīra is not the only founder of Jainism. Mahavīra's predecessor Pārśvanātha is also regarded as a historical figure. But according to Jains there were twenty-two other Jinas besides Pārśvanātha and Mahavīra. They are however regarded as mythical figures by historians. But it may be that they were historical persons who preached a religion similar to that of the Jains and hence the Jains regard them as their teachers. Even

if they had no real existence, the doctrine indicates that Jainism or a similar cult existed long before Pārśvanātha. The earlier forms of Jainism and their founders may be shown to have close relations with the rātra cults and some other ancient cults of India.

If Jainism is believed to have existed in prehistoric periods, it stands a good comparison with the religion of the 'Yatis' of the Vedic period. Though the two words are now taken to have two different meanings, they may have fundamentally referred to the something. The 'Yati' *controls* his passion and the Jina *conquers* his passion. Both thus were religious people and sannyasins. The Vedic Yatins and the Jinas were both anti-Vedic. The Yatis were non-Vedic worshippers of Indra (See ante), and so were the Jinas anti-Vedic. The traditions, already referred to before, of a king Yati having followed a non-Vedic religion may point to the fact that Jains existed even in the Vedic period. Yayāti is also known to have become 'Jitātman' and Jitakrodha (words reminding of Jinas) and to have performed severe austerities, as done by the Jain Sanyasins and his attempt to attain 'Nirjaras' might have really referred to his having adopted the Jain 'Nirjaras' doctrine, misinterpreted in the later Hindu Purāṇas. So are the Rājeyas, sons of Rājī, known in the Purāṇas to have been converts to Jainism. Veṇa, a non-Vedic king is also known to Jains to have become a Jaina and he was also a yati according to the Vedas. It was perhaps the yatis who later on became known as Ekāntins who are known in the Mahābhārata to be living in the Śveta-dvīpa. The epithet Śveta Jājins' applied to these Ekāntins may indicate some connection between these 'Śvetā Jājins' and the Śvetāmbara Jains. The Jains also believe this branch of Jainism to have originated in a very early period. The early Jains might also have some relations with the Vedic Munis who followed a non-Vedic cult of Rudra. Hence it may be that the Jains also include 11 Rudras among their Salākāpurushas. In face of these evidences, the antiquity of the Jain religion cannot be altogether disbelieved.

Moreover, if we take into consideration the heritage, names and symbols etc. of the early Jinas, it may be shown that they were related with the mythology of the Rātra cults of Brahmā and Dharma, and that the Jains were acquainted with the antiquity of the Brahmā cult. The legends of these early Jinas must have been taken from those of the Brahmā cult.

The first of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras is called Ṛṣabha-nātha or Ādinātha. He was the son of Nābhīrāja and his wife Marudevī. Nābhīrāja may be identified with Brahmā for his having arisen out of the navel of Nārāyaṇa. According to the Purāṇas (Garuḍa P—Pūrvakhanda Ch. 6) Brahmā's daughter was Marutvatī who was married to Dharma, son of Brahmā. In some traditions, Dharma was Brahmā or Nārāyaṇa himself. Hence when Nārāyaṇa was identified with Viṣṇu, Ṛṣabha-nāth was known as one of the Avatāras of Viṣṇu in the Bhagavata Purāṇa. Therein he is known as the son of Nābhī and Sudevī or Marudevī. In the Mahābhārata geneology of Brahmā, it is said that Brahmā's son was Manu, his son was Priyavrata, his son Agnidhara, his son was Nābhī and Nābhī's son was Ṛṣabha who had accepted asceticism (Pravrajyā) (Maṭ. Purana ch. 53). Thus Ṛṣabha's relation with the Brahmā Dharma cult was well known in ancient India. Ādideva was another name of Ṛṣabha. Brahmā was also known as Ādideva, and the Buddhists also later on evolved the cult of Ādi-Buddha. Thus the legend of Ṛṣabha must have been taken from the mythology of Brahmā.

The first Tīrthāṅkara's colour is said to have been Golden Yellow. This may be compared to the 'golden' colour of Brahmā as his name Hiraṇyagarbha indicates. The first Jina's symbol was bull. Bull was Dharma himself closely allied to Brahmā.

The first Tīrthāṅkara is sometimes called by the Jains as son of Bharata. But according to the Mahābhārata, Bharata was a son of Ṛṣabha. This geneology of the first Tīrthāṅkara therefore appears to have been the result of some confusion. But there is a general agreement of characteristics of both the first Jina and Brahmā.

The second Tirthankara was Ajitanātha, son of Jitasatru and Vijayā and his emblem was the elephant. According to the Jains, Jitasatru was one of the eleven Rudras. Thus Ajitanātha may be taken as a follower of the Rudra cult which was also related to the Brahmā cult. Zimmer (Ibid p. 104) associates elephant with Brahmā. Thus the second Jina also may be associated with the Brahmā-Rudra cult.

Elephant is, however, a special emblem of Indra. Indra was a great conqueror and hence the second Jina might be identified with Indra. It has been shown that Indra cult arose after the cult of Brahmā. If the first Jina was Brahmā, next was Indra.

Both the Fourth and the Fifth Jinas—Abhinandanātha and Sumatinātha were born in Ayodhyā. The symbol of the fourth one was Monkey. This and the name remind us of Raghunandana as the name of Rāmachandra and his association with monkeys. The fifth Jina's symbol (Kraunchabird) and name re-echo the story of how Ratnākara the robber became the sage and poet Vālmiki after the incident of the Kraunchamithuna. The awakening of good sense in his mind might be the reason of his being called 'Sumati (good sense)—nātha'. Rāmachandra's association with the Satya worship has already been discussed before (Ch. 2). The Sāsanadevatā of the fourth Jina was Mahākālī, showing thus the relation of Jainism with the Tantric doctrines.

The Sixth Tirthankara was Padmaprabha, son of Dharana and Susimā. His emblem is red lotus. Dharana's feminine Dharanī means 'earth'. Dharanī or Prithvī is lotus according to Purānic and Brahmapa traditions. From Lotus rose Brahmā. Padmaprabha may thus be another name for Brahmā, associated with the cult of earth goddess. Dharana's another name was Sridhara, a name applied to Viṣṇu. But 'Śri' was originally associated with Brahmā.

The seventh Jina was Supārśvanātha, born at Kasi. His parents were Supratishṭha and Prithivī. According to Jains themselves Supratishṭha was one of the eleven Rudras.

Supratishṭha was a sacred place at Bodhgaya according to Mahābhārata and where Buddha is said to have worshipped Prithivī. All their associations with Kāśī indicate the close relation of this Jina with the Rūdra Śiva worship at Banaras which was also sacred to Brahma.

The ninth Tirthankara was Pushpadanta son of Sugriva and Rāmā. Their emblem is makara. The makara symbol associates him with Kāma. Kāma was a most beautiful person, as Sugriva also indicates. Rāmā and Rati are identical. Kāma was the son of Dharma. This Jina therefore is related to the Dharma cult.

The eleventh Jina was Śreyāṃsanātha, son of Viṣṇu, and Viṣṇudri or Viṣṇā, born at Simhapuri (in Guzerat). His emblem was Rhinoceros or Garuḍa. The names of his parents clearly associate him with Vishnu cult. This association of a Jina with the Rhinoceros proves the sanctity of this animal in India, not known from any other source, except the presence of its figures on the Indus Valley Seals. This may help in explaining the significance of the presence of animals on those seals.

The next Jina Vāsudeva was the son of Vasudeva and Vijayā. His emblem was the buffalo. The eight Vasus are known as the sons of Dharma, one of the Vasus being Yama himself (Mat. Purāṇa Ch. 171). Buffalo was the emblem of Yama. Vasu Uparichara had a special relation with the Rātra cult and Śrāddha. Thus this Jina also is related to the Dharma-Brahmā cult.

The 15th Tirthankara was Dharmanātha, son of Bhānu and Suvratā. His emblem is Vajradanda. Suvratā is known in the Purāṇas as the wife of Surya, and his son was Yama. This Jina was clearly related to the cult of Dharma, in its later form. (see ch. 2—for Dharma)

Śāntinātha, the next Jina, was the son of Viśvasena and Achirā. His symbol is deer. He was born at Hastināpura. He was perhaps the same as 'Śāntātman' an avatāra of Viṣṇu according to Panchrātra texts. Hastinapura was the home of

Kauśika and Brahmadatta, the probable promulgator of the Saptarātra cult (See his legends in the Matsya Purāṇa). The Deer symbol indicates Brahmā and Dharma; for both these are known to have assumed this form (See Chapter on Buddhism). Visvasena may refer to one of the Visvadeva gods of whom Dharma was one. The association of this Jina with Brahmā-Dharma cult is plausible.

The seventeenth Jina was Kunṭhunātha, born of Sūrya and Śrī Devī at Hastināpura. He was of Golden yellow colour and his symbol was a goat. According to some Vedic tradition Śrī was the wife of Sūrya. According to the Jains, this Jina was one of the Kāmadevas. Goat is regarded as a symbol of Kāma, son of Dharma or Brahmā. Aja and Ajapāla were also names of Brahmā and Siva. Sūrya was also associated with the Rātra cult. Thus this Tīrthankara was related to the rātra cults of Surya and Brahmā.

Aranātha, the eighteenth Jina was the son of Sudarśana and Mitrā. The Sudarśana Chakra, as told before, was the same as Dharmachakra or Kālachakra. A Buddhist Jataka story will be related later on to show how this Chakra was a favourite of all religious sects. Aranātha's symbol being 'fish' identifies him with Kāma, son of Dharma. This Jina was also perhaps related to the Sūrya and Mitra cult and Sudarśana is often identified with sun's pathway.

The twenty second Tīrthankara was Neminātha or Rathanemi. According to Jain legends (Uttarādhyāyana Sutra XXII—S. B. E. Jain Sūtras Pt. II p. 112 ff) this Jina wanted to marry Rājimati who was formerly the wife of Vasudeva's son Keśava, but had become a Jain. Rājimati having refused, both ended their days in severe austerities. Neminātha's symbol was the conchshell, associated with Kṛishṇa. The Jain legend may be an echo of a 'Rāji' in the R̥gveda (VI. 26. 6) whom Sayana takes as a girl. The Purāṇic legends about Rājeyas have already been mentioned.

Pārśvanātha's father was Aśvasena who was a king of the Nagas. The figures of this Jina contain hoods of snakes on their

heads. Legends about the Nagas were current in Society during the time of the Buddha. These Nagas might have relations with the cult of Śiva. Nārāyaṇa is also said to be lying on Ananta nāga and if Nārāyaṇa was Brahmā in an early period, nagas may be associated also with the Brahmā cult.

Thus out of the 24 Tirthankaras, about sixteen may be shown to have more or less connection with the cults of Brahmanism and Dharmas. These legends thus indicate that even if we do not believe in the existence of these Jinās, religions similar to Jainism must have existed in India from a very early period, before the days of Mahavīra and the Buddha. Mahavīra's religion has been shown to be related to the Saptarātra and the Nārātra cults. Thus the Jain religion was also allied to the Brahmā cult. The influence on Jainism of the Kṛishṇa cult may be seen from the Chhandogya Upanishad legend in which Ghorā Āngirās is said to have instructed his disciple Kṛishṇa on the doctrine of Ahimsā which became a chief feature of Jainism.

CHAPTER 4

BRAHMĀ-CULT AND BUDDHISM.

Like the Jain religion, Buddhism also arose in the territories round about Vaiśālī and Magadha in the Sixth Century B.C. Factors which led to the rise of Jainism must also have contributed to that of Buddhism. Buddhism was also indebted to Jainism, or both were perhaps indebted to a common source—traditions and rituals prevailing in the sixth century in the territories where they sprang. Buddhist traditions refer to the existence of sixty three religious sects at the time of the Buddha, including the Jains, Ājīvikas, Jāṭilas, Devadhammakas (worshippers of god 'Dharma') and so on. The Philosophy of the Upanishads must have already been known to the land. So were the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of philosophy. Kāśhapa Kātyāyana had already been preaching his theory of Saptakāyavāda (see Ch. 1). The Vedic religion with Indra at the head of a vast panorama of Gods and the non-Vedic Yaksha worship were also known to the Buddha. The Rātra cults and the cult of Brahmā will also be shown to have contributed a good deal to the rise of this new religion.

Senart in a brilliant essay tried to prove that Buddhism was mainly based on the Yoga system. He had interpreted Buddha's temptation by Mara as being connected with Yoga Samādhi. At the same time he noticed the similarity of this religion with the Vishnu Bhāgavata cult and writes "between the two religious systems, separated by so much of divergences and having no idea of mutual connection, the agreement runs on two parallel lines in doctrines and legends." Buddhism, according to him, has similarity to the Sāṃkhya system but rejects the fundamental principles of Puruṣha, Prakṛiti and Guṇas. It uses expressions and formulas of Sāṃkhya but turns avowed opposition to it. He shows that Buddhism was essentially a monastic order. Buddha came into contact with Arāḍa Kālāma who preached the yoga system which excluded the guṇas of the Sāṃkhya. So

Senart establishes some relation of the Buddha with Kālāma's system. Senart concludes that Buddhism was a mixture of the Yoga system with the Viṣṇu-Bhāgavata cult. But Senart may be said to have achieved only a partial success in finding out all the factors which contributed to the rise of Buddhism.

One important such factor was undoubtedly the religion of the Muṇḍaka Upanishad related by the Āngirāsas. Buddha is also known to have been an Āngirasa. The Upanishad refers in some details to the duty of the Sanyāsins when it says, "Those who perform tapasyā, fast and live in forest and beg depart to the home of the Ātman through the 'door of the Sun'. The Upanishad further says that one should not deviate from Deva Kārya (worship of gods) and Pitṛikārya (ancestor worship). Philosophical speculation, ancestor worship, worship of gods and Sanyāsa were reconciled in this Upanishad.

The Muṇḍaka Upanishad having referred to the seven tongues of fire having similar names of the Tāntric Goddesses may indicate that the Tāntric doctrines were really related to the Atharva Veda. Hence we find a hymn to Durgā in that Veda, which might or might not refer really to the goddess Durgā. But recent researches are tending to prove that the Tāntric doctrines and worship of a Mother goddess perhaps existed in India even before the Vedas. A figure having similarity with Kālī has been discovered at Mohenjodaro. Scholars have tried to find out Tāntric practices at the time of the Buddha (See "Jainism").

It has been already pointed out (last Chapter) that the Jains were also acquainted with a Mahākālī. Buddhists also were acquainted in a very early period with this goddess. A Theragāthā (no. 136) is ascribed to one Mahākāla and he performed worship and lived in a cemetery. A woman named Kālī is said to have collected parts of the corpse and put them before Mahākāla. The association of Mahākāla with cemetery and corpses and the attempts of Kālī to please Mahākāla by collecting the parts of corpses for him clearly indicate that this song was collected by the Buddhists from popular songs about

Buddha at Bodhgaya and even the Vishnupāda. God Dharma at Bodhgaya mentioned therein cannot refer to the Buddha but to God Dharma, worshipped in an aniconic form. (See authors—'Bodhgaya Temple') The Narayani chapters and the Santiparvan as a Saptarātra text appear to have been composed also in a pre-Buddhist period (but they might have been tagged to the Mahābhārata in a later age) and references to Buddha might refer to the Buddhas previous to Gotama Buddha. References to Lūka may not refer actually to Buddhist Stupas. The custom of depositing asthi (bones) inside a structure was prehistoric and all scholars believe that the Buddhists made their stupas after the models of earlier Indian structures. The 'Stupa' is not mentioned in the Epic and the words Chaitya need not refer to Buddhist chaityas. The words 'Chaturmahārājika (Sant. P. 338. 40) and 'Dharmarājika need not also be regarded as having been borrowed from the Buddhists. There is nothing to show that the Buddhists had not taken these words from the existing cults of eastern India. Dharmarājika, in the meaning of a stupa, was taken from the cult of Dharma, as the origin of stupa discussed in the next Chapter will also indicate. Mahārāja was also the name of a god who was worshipped during the building rites in the age of the Gṛhya Sūtras. Mahārāja is also known as the name of one of the Ganadevatās. These Chapters of the Santi Parvan and the Vanaparvan Tirtha chapters may thus be taken as having been composed in the pre-Buddhist period. If so, the Pancharātra or Saptarātra cult of the Mahābhārata and the worship of God Dharma i.e. Dharma-Brahmā cult of Bodhgaya may also be said to have contributed to the rise of Buddhist doctrines.

Besides the Muṇḍaka Upanishad, other Upanishads also must have contributed to the rise of Buddhism. It has already been shown that the Upanishads knew the Trirātra, Pancharātra and Saptarātra doctrines. The Hayasirsa cult was also known to them. The cults of three Fires, three Prāṇas, five Fires, five gods, five Prāṇas and seven gods were known to the Upanishads. The Muṇḍaka refers to 7 Prāṇas, seven flames,

seven Homas, seven Lokas. The Upanishads knew also Pitrīkārya (Śrāddha etc.). These cults must therefore have existed in eastern India at the time of the Buddha's birth. The Ratra cults and the Brahmā-Dharma cult therefore may be regarded as having contributed much to Buddhism.

The 'Janmāntara' theory, as depicted in the story of Kauśika of Kurukshetra which is called a Dharmakshetra (Seat of God Dharma and, Uttaravedi of Pitāmaha in Mbh.), his seven sons their rebirths (5nr 7), rebirth of one of his sons asking Brahmādatta of Pañchāla, his acquiring the power to understand the speech of animals by learning a special knowledge of it from Hari (perhaps a Saptarātra cult) and rebirth of all those sons as sons of Yayāti (who as already shown, followed a religion as of the Jains), Yayāti's fall from heaven and his meeting with Ashtaka, is closely associated with the Janmāntara theory of the Buddhists. It is further said in the Purāṇa that whoever listens to the story of Brahmādatta goes to Brahmāloka. This indicates the relation of this theory with Brahmā's cult. Similarly the Mahābhārata depicts the seven births of Brahmā and seven births of king Brahmādatta. The influence of all these theories is reflected in the "Previous-birth-stories" (Jātakas) of the Buddha, (in many births he being born as animals and birds) his remembering the history of previous births (as the sons of Kauśika did), and the association of most of these stories with a king Brahmādatta of Bauaras. Both Banaras and Gaya are said in the Matsya Purāṇa to have been the best of the Pitrī-tirthas. The legends of Kaushika are related to the Śrāddha cult. Thus the Buddhist theory of rebirth must have arisen from the Saptarātra cult as reflected in the above mentioned legends. According to the Buddhists, seven births are prominent. According to the Kathāvatthū (l. 29) there are seven births of men. The Ratna Sutta (Sutta-nipāta) says "Those who understand the truth taught by the Buddha, will not have to take the eight birth." Similarly had Brahmā and Brahmādatta seven births (converted by the Pañcharātra Purāṇa into "5" births).

This theory of rebirth also gave rise to the legend of 'Seven Buddhas. But Buddhism also knew the Trirātra and the Pañcharātra cults. Hence according to the Buddhists, three Buddhas appeared in the Wasa-Kalpa; in the Mahābhadrā Kalpa, five Buddhas appeared (also compare the legend of rise of five Buddhas mentioned in Ch. I) (Hardy—Manual of Buddhism p. 95). The theory of seven Jinas and the seven 'manly' avatars of Vishnu had originated from the common sources of all—viz the rebirth theory of Brahmā, as held in the Trirātrā, Pañcharātra and Saptarātra cults. The liking for the numeral 'Seven' by the Buddhists has been noticed by scholars; but no other explanation appears to be satisfactory. Thus there is no doubt that the rātra cults of Brahmā must have existed in the pre-Buddhist period and exerted great influence on the doctrines of Buddhism. Though Buddhism was influenced by many of the then existing religions and philosophies of eastern India, Brahmā-Dharma Saptarātra cult was perhaps the predominant religion in eastern India—north Bihar and the Gaya region, with which Buddhism may be shown closely related. Banaras was also a stronghold of the saptarātra cult.

The birth of Gautama Buddha's predecessor—Kāsyapa Buddha is also said to have taken place at Banaras. His father was also called Bramadatta. Even if he was not the king Brahmadatta of the Jātaka stories and the Matsya Purāṇa, his very name indicates its origin from Brahmā. His mother was Dharmadevi (reminding us of association of Dharma cult with that of Brahmā). The period of his asceticism was seven days. (Hardy—Manual of Buddhism p.97). Thus Kasyapa Buddha was also born in a place where the Saptarātra cult of Brahmā and Dharma prevailed. Similarly it has already been said that the first or Second Buddha was also called 'Sikhin' a term closely allied to the rātra cults (see Ch. I).

The existence of the Saptakāyavāda of Kakudha Kātyāna during the time of the Buddha might also have some resemblance with the Sapta tanu theory of Brahma from which the Saptarātra cult had arisen (see ch. I).

Coming to the birthplace of Gotama Buddha, we find that his city 'Kapilavāstu' must have had some relation with the sage Kapila and his Sāmkhya philosophy. This philosophy, as has already been shown was connected with the rātra cults. Kapila, according to the Puranas was also a form of Brahmā and was an avatāra of Narayana. Buddha was born amidst the Sakya clan. In the Rigveda (V. 52. 17) there is a mention of a tribe called the Sākins who are known as 'the seven times seven,' the sons of Prishni (mother-cow) and Rudra. They perhaps lived at that time on the Jumnā. These Sākins may be regarded as the ancestors of the Sakyas, for the Sakyas are associated with Kapila or Kapilā which is the name of a divine cow in the Gaya mahātmya; and in the story of Kaushika, his sons had died after eating up the 'Kapilā' cow of his father. The word Kapilā thus may be identified with Prishni (the mother cow), the wife of Rudra. This hymn is addressed to the Maruts who are also 'seven times seven' i.e. 49 in number. It must be mentioned that Maruts or Vāyu are closely associated with the Srāddha cults, as the ancestors are said to assume the form of Vāyu (Vāyubhūta). The Sākya also must have been worshippers of Kapila or Kapilā and the Maruts; and Gaya, the Pitrītirtha was also sacred to the Maruts or Vāyu. Thus Gautama Buddha from his birth was closely associated with a place and tribe in which the Rātra cults were well known. He was born of Māyā, a creative agent according to the Vedānta and Pancharatra philosophy.

After his birth Gautama is known to have been washed by two Nāgas (elephants) and so was Narayana on the Nāga when Brahmā was born and Lakshmi was being bathed by two elephants. (see next chapter). The new born child then took seven steps. Vishnu as a dwarf and Indra as a Jackal took three steps according to the Triratna Vedic cult; but Buddha took seven steps as he belonged to the Saptarātra cult. But he was not satisfied with his religion (saptarātra) and left the world.

Buddha first learnt lessons from Alāḍa Kālāma a Sāmkhya-yoga philosopher, but did not like his religion. (See Senart's

view above). Then he went to Gayā'

Buddha must have chosen to go to Gayā owing to the celebrity of the place as a Brahmasādhāna or Pitṛitṛtha. According to the Brahmanda Purana 'One has to worship Brahmā by the Brahmasādhāna.' Gayā was a Brahmasādhāna and a great Pitṛitṛtha, according to the Mahābhārata and other Puranas. Gautama, though a Sanyasi, could not neglect pitṛikārya, as enjoined by the Muṇḍaka and other Upanishads. At Gayā, Buddha adopted the religious method of his five companions known as the 'Panchavaggiyas.' These five companions might represent the religion of Pancharātra. Gayā was then a seat of Pancharātra cult—not perhaps of Vishnu, but of Brahmā. The Vaiṣṇava Pancharātra cult might also have already come to Gayā, for according to Jayaswal 'Vishnupāda' at Gayā had been set up before the Nīrūktā. From this contact of Buddha with the Vaiṣṇava Pancharātra sect might have arisen the parallelism of the Buddha legends and the Krishna legends. Or this similarity might have grown up in a later period, for Vishnupāda itself cannot prove that at that time Vāsudeva was identified with Vishnu at Gayā.

Buddha is said to have performed strict austerities for six years. It might be something like the Śaḍāṅga Saiva religion mentioned in the Brahmanda purana (XI. 32), or the Śaṭchakrabheda of the Tantrics. But Buddha was not satisfied with this. He now realised that neither luxury nor strict penance would give him supreme bliss. So he took his former meals, i.e. he returned to his former system of living and religion (Saptarātra cult). He thus broke with the Pancharātra companions who left him and went to Benaras.

Buddha then came to Uruvelā or Uruvilvā, modern site of Bodhgayā. The Gayā region was the site of Jāṭila Sanyasins, of whom three Kasyapa brothers were preserving fires in three places—Gayā, Nadi and Uruvelā. These "three brothers" and "three fires" perhaps indicate that these brothers or companions in faith were followers of the Trirātra cult of Agni or Brahmā. Bodhgayā thus appears to have been a seat of the Trirātra

cult. Bodhgaya was also a sacred place to Sāvitrī and 'Savitar', was a trirātra god (see ch 1). With the foundation of the Vishnu-pāda at Gaya, Uruvela remained then a centre of Brahma-Dharma-Śiva worship as a religion of the unorthodox as the Gayamāhātmya shows.

Barua (Gaya and Bodhgayā) has drawn a vivid picture of the lives of these Sanyāsins of Gayā. They were Brahmanical in creed but worshipped the god Purana Jaṭila who might have been Śiva or a form of combined Śiva-Brahmā. They also worshipped the Earthgoddess. These Jaṭila brothers commanded great respect and had a large income from pilgrims who came there on special occasions. They occupied a position similar to that of a Mohanta of a Hindu place of pilgrimage, though Barua tried to explain this away. A chapter in the Dhammapada known as the 'Sahassa Varga' is said to have been preached by the Buddha to the Jaṭilas. The teaching gives stress on the futility of hundred and thousand sets of various things which are useless in comparison to one beneficial thing. This stress on the numbers '100' and '1000' indicates that the Buddha wanted to prove the futility of the cult of big numerals to the Jaṭilas who might have been following such a cult allied to the rātra cults. It will be shown below that Bodhgayā was a seat of Trirātra cult in which a trinity or triad of Brahmā, Dharma and Śiva, was worshipped as gods, and the site where Buddha sat for knowledge was the place where Indians from all places came to offer Pinda and performed Srāddha ceremony.

Buddha at Uruvelā selected the full moon day as the day of his attaining Buddhahood. A hymn to the Fullmoon (Atharva Veda VII. 80) refers to "Full-moon's mighty bull" and "Prajāpati". This perhaps refers to Dharma as 'Bull' and Brahmā who were specially related to the fullmoon night. Buddha wanted to worship these two gods. Buddha, it is said, knew that several other Buddhas had, before him, attained knowledge here at Bodhgayā (known as Dharmāranya to the Mahābhārata) under the Vaṭa tree (Akshaya Vaṭa). Five Buddhas were already born. He wanted to be the sixth. The seventh was to

Manañ Nāt. The word 'Manañ Nāt' may be the Buddhist form of 'Mohant' and the 'elephant' may have arisen from the word 'Mātanga', as the name of the Mohant was perhaps Kāsyapa Mātanga. The Mahabharata refers to the legend of Kāsyapa Matanga and his āsrama is said to exist at Bodhgaya even now. The whole incident may also be explained as temptation of the Buddha by Kāma whose one name is 'Manosija'. Buddha as Brahmachāri had to be 'jītakāma' and the story might have arisen from that. Buddha was tempted by Māra also at night; this night's incident might refer to his fight with Kāma; but the earlier incident might have been a struggle with the Mohant of the place.

Buddha then proceeded to the place where the previous Buddha had attained salvation. But Buddha is said to have gone to various directions and did not know where to sit before he discovered the Vajrāsana. This hesitation might have been due to his information that previous Buddhas had attained Bodhi under the Vaṭa tree with the vajrāsana below it, whereas he found at first a Vaṭa tree without the Vajrāsana (The Ajapāla nyagrodha tree). He found the Vajrāsana, but it was now under an Aśvatthva. The old vaṭa perhaps died and an asvatthva had grown on the place. The Vajrāsana was the sacred object of his worship, as he was an worshipper of Dharma. Vajrāsana was the Dharmachakra or god Dharma of the Sapta-rātra cult. The Mahābhārata enjoins 'touching of Dharma' at Dharmāranya which must have referred to the symbolic form of god Dharma in which he was usually worshipped.

Buddha then scattered the grass (Kuśa) on the ground and sat on it. Several traditions say that he sat on the Vajrāsana. This does not appear to be correct. The seat is said to have been 14 cubits in length (i.e. 21 ft) which is the dimension of the present Bodhgayā temple in the inner side. But the size of the earliest Vajrāsana of the Maurya period discovered there shows that his seat was 7 ft. and not 21'. The Kuśa bed he prepared would naturally be such as to be sufficient for a man to sleep upon and so there is no reason why a seat of 21 ft. was to be

prepared. Thus Buddha began to worship the Vajrāsana which was Dharma and the tree which was Brahmā before he began his yoga.

In course of his yoga, Mara again came to tempt him and the Buddha called Earth to his witness. The reason why the earthgoddess was called upon appears to be the existence of her worship and perhaps even a temple at that site dedicated to that goddess. Earth goddess was associated with Brahmā-Dharma cult and according to Yuan-chwang there was a temple of Earth (god, according to the traveller) at Bodhgayā when he visited the place. According to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (x. 153), "when one feels that Ātman is entering the burning earth, he may know that Siddhi has come". It is also perhaps for this that the Buddha touched the earth when sitting in yoga.

After the yoga was over he is said to have risen in the air by the miracle of Yamaka-patihariya. The word "Yamaka" perhaps indicates some relation with 'Yama' or Dharma and Pratyāhāra was a yogic action. (*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* X. III). This might be an echo of the *Altareya Upanishad* (IV. 6.) in which it is said, "By his Prajñā (wisdom=Bodhihood) as he did previously by Atman, he arose from this world to Svargaloka, and securing the desired things became amṛita" (deathless). Buddha had attained "amṛita" by conquering death and so arose to Svarga.

What Buddha did here throughout the night was a form of Yoga; but it may be compared to the Upavasat vow enjoined in the *Bṛihad Aranyaka Upanishad* (VI. 3), which is a part of the Yotistoma rites, and consists in limiting the food for twelve days each day living on cow's milk only. It is to be performed by "Whoever desires to obtain greatness" (*Kaushitaki Upanishad* II. 3). It consists in offering to fire and propitiating various gods and a goddess of evil. About this oblation it is said, "Whoever pours it on a dry trunk, will see its branches rise and its leaves spring forth". This reference indicates that at Bodhgayā was the site of the Akshaya Vata, such an offering was the customary rite of the place, in order to keep up the tree alive. The name

'Bodhi' tree might arise from its association with Śrāddha ceremony, in which the Rīgvedic 'Rudra Sukta' has to be read, and the Sukta refers in one place to the word 'Bodhi.'

After attaining Bodhihood Buddha rose in the morning from his seat, went a few steps to the north-east and looked from there with unblenching eyes toward where he sat (i.e. south-westwards). In course of the Śrāddha, one should look to the south and pray to the Pitṛins in silence, sometimes by looking on a lamp to be placed there (Mat. Purāṇa XVI. 48). Here where the Buddha stood (i.e. to the north-east of the Vajrāsana and the tree) was a 'Brahmayupa', much praised in the Mahābhārata and depicted in sculpture on the Bharhut Rails. Such a Yupa is to be placed to the north-east of the Śrāddha Vedit. Here at this spot the Buddhists later on created a Chaitya called 'Animeshalochana Chaitya.' Originally it appears that there was a 'Yupa' like that erected at the time of a Śrāddha. As the Bodhi tree and Vajrasana were the places of Pindadāna and Śrāddha, it is natural that such a Yupa sacred to Dharma and Brahmā had been erected there, as described in the Mahābhārata.

Then the Buddha stood between that spot and the tree and spent seven days in walking to and fro, from east to west and from west to east and it is said that Buddha's steps became jewels. Hence the Buddhists set up here the Ratnachakṛama Chaitya, a representation of which is found on the Bharhut Rails. The steps of the Buddha in form of Jewels were to be found on a long platform of a low height, over which the Buddhists erected a roof supported on pillars. The details about this shrine will be discussed later on. This is sufficient to indicate here that what the Buddha did here was to perform a pradakṣiṇa ceremony, perhaps round a Vedit which was the place on which people had already worshipped 'Vasu' in the form of a 'Vasudhārā'. This 'Vasudhārā' is the worship of seven or five Vasus on a neither high nor low wall (Bhitti) besmeared with cowdung, the top of which was to be marked with vermillion and sandal (See Kātyāyana on Cchandogya Parīśiṣṭa). This ceremony

was a very ancient custom and had to be performed in course of sacrifices. This was specially connected with the traditions of 'Uparichara Vasu' as recorded in the Mahābhārata and mentioned before (See Ch. 2). This is known to the white Yajur-Veda (Book XVIII) and the Śrauta Sūtras (Baudhayana 17. 24-26). As already shown this Vasu-worship was originally related to the Brahmā-Dharma worship and Śrāddha. Nowadays this ceremony is performed only in the Āhhyudayika (or Nāndimukha) Śrāddha. It is therefore quite likely that a wall for performing this was already existing at Bodhgayā and the Buddha walked by its side. The worship of the Vasus was essential at Bodhgayā, for the Vasus were the Pitrins (Mat. Purāṇa 19. 3 Manu Saṁhitā III. 28) and the Buddha was performing a Pitrīkārya at Bodhgayā, the best of the Pitrīrthas (Mat. p. 22). Buddha spent seven days there perhaps for worshipping each of the seven Vasus during one day. The Gayā kṛitya even now is known to be performed for seven days. Brahmā is still worshipped in Bengal for seven days in the month of Bhādra. The mantra for Pradakṣiṇa is "Idam Viśhnur=vicakramé" etc. Thus it is that the Buddhists pointed out this Vasudhārā wall as the place of Buddha's Ratna (Synonym of Vasu)—Chankrama (perhaps=dhārā=gati=step). That Buddha's action was a pradakṣiṇa round something is apparent from the Buddhist legend that in course of his walk there, Buddha "went round the whole universe." (Lalitavistara). This may refer to his going round the shrine of Vasumatī (which might have stood there, as indicated above) or more likely round the Vediti, for Vediti is regarded as the whole earth (cf "Vedimāhuḥ paramantam prithivyāḥ" or "Etāvati vai Prithivī=ryāvati Vediti=riti"—Wilson's note on Rīgveda Vol. II p. 219).

Then the Buddha went North-west into the Jewel shrine said to have been set up by the gods. This undoubtedly refers to a mandapa which stood there for performance of Śrāddha by the pilgrims. There Buddha is said to have spent a week going through the whole Abhidhamma piṭaka. This piṭaka was undoubtedly composed after the Buddha, and Buddha's going

through it appears to be the Buddhists' wrongly understanding the 'Ābhyūdayika Śrāddha' with which the word Abhidharma piṭaka has some similarity. Buddha thus performed the Ābhyūdayika Śrāddha there for seven days, as Gayā Śrāddha actually is performed for 7 days. Another name of this Śrāddha is the 'Nāndimukha' Śrāddha. Buddha began his whole programme the previous day, from the time of his visit by Nandā—Nāndimukha also meaning "whose Mukha or beginning is Nandā". Thus there is no doubt that Buddha's work these days was the performance of a Nāndimukha Śrāddha which was perhaps the name of the Śrāddha to be performed at Bodhgaya as current in an ancient time. That the Gayā Śrāddha was actually so called is known from the fact that Sri Chaitanya also is said to have performed the Nāndimukha at Gaya. (See life of Chaitanya by Murarigupta and Kavi Karnapura quoted by B. B. Majumdar in 'Chaitanya Chairitē Upādāna').

Buddha passed seven days at the foot of the Bodhi tree, according to the Mahavagga. Then he went to the Ajapāla nyagrodha. This has been taken by scholars to be the 'Goat-herds' Banyan tree. Buddha's approach to that tree indicates that it must have some sanctity. The word 'Ajapāla' there cannot refer to a goat-herd. It may mean the Banyan tree of Śiva who at Gaya was known as the protector of Brahmā (or Aja). This Ajapāla must be taken as equivalent to the 'Dharmēśa' of the Vāyupurāṇa. There was thus a Śiva Linga close to the Vajrasana, perhaps to its east. Its existence there might be attributed to the Jāṭila Sanyasis who worshipped this god. Moreover as related before, Rudra-Śiva's presence is quite expected by the side of Brahmā and Dharma.

Buddha then went to the Mucalinda Nāga shrine and the Naga protected him from a terrible rain. According to the Purāṇas the followers of Rudra were Nagas. There might have thus stood a shrine of a nāga close to the Śiva's Banyan tree. The name 'Mūcalinda' may also be a perverted form of the word 'Mukti-alinda' and there is no tree called Mucalinda (Mucukunda cannot be Muchalinda). In that case the shrine was

the Naga shrine in the Mukti Alinda' i.e. the alinda or portico containing the figure of a serpent of Śiva. The alinda in front of a temple is called Mukhamandapa. There is also a structure called Muktimandapa. This shrine was such a mandapa in front of Śiva's temple. Nāga or Ahi was allied to the Rātra cult, as the 'Ahir Budhnya' Saṁhitā indicates.

These descriptions thus suggest that at Bodhgayā even in Buddha's time there were the Bodhi tree (symbol of Brahmā), the Vajrāsana (representing Dharma), a Śiva Linga inside a shrine under a tree, and a small chapel containing figures of Śiva's serpents. All these are perhaps depicted on the coins of the Panchāla 'mitra' kings of the 2nd century B.C. (see Plate in Author's 'Bodhgayā Temple').

From the Naga shrine, Buddha went to the Rājāyatana and sat at its mula'. This word 'mula' misled the Buddhists to take the Rājāyatana to be a tree. 'Mūla' also means the 'base or foot of a building and Rājāyatana could not be same as 'Rājādana' which is the name of a tree. 'Rājāyatana here must refer to the 'house of the Rājā' i. e. a structure. It is likely that 'Rājā here refers to a god and Rājāyatana refers to the 'Rājaprāsāda chaitya' mentioned in the Bodhgayā Rail Inscriptions of the Sunga period. It was at the foot of this shrine that the Buddha first broke his fast by eating madhupindas offered by two merchants from Kalinga. These two merchants must have come for offering Pindas at Bodhgayā and offered it at the Rājāyatana. In that case the word 'Rājā' may refer to Dharmaśāstra (or Yama) or Śiva. The home of the Śiva linga at the foot of the Ajapāla Banyan tree might be referred to here as the Rājāyatana, which in the Sunga period might have been converted into a prāsāda or temple referred to in inscriptions as the 'Rājaprāsāda chaitya'.

After breaking his fast, Buddha thought of preaching his religion. He was hesitating and it is said that Brahmā visited the Buddha and exhorted him to preach. He had just finished worshipping Brahmā and hence his intention of going out to preach is said to have been the result of Brahmā's visit.

this legend is also noteworthy. These legends indicate why Buddha's (5) companions had retired to Sārnātha and also Buddha's selection of this place as the first place of his sermon.

There at Sārnātha, Buddha declared himself as the 'Tathāgata'. According to the Yoga system, the yogi is known as 'Sarvagata' (Brahmānda purāṇa XI. 42). Then Buddha preached his Ashtāngika mārga. The similarity of Buddha's teachings with those of the Rātra cults has already been indicated (Ch. 1—Mahābhārata rātra cults). The number "8" of this system arose from the Pancharātra cult of Gayā and Banaras and the Trirātra cult of Bodhgayā ($5+3=8$).

Buddha is said to have turned the 'Wheel of Law' at Sārnāth. The idea of Dharmachakra was taken by the Buddha from the Vajrasana at Bodhgayā which, as already shown, was the Dharma Chakra, the Kāla Chakra, the Sudarśana, Brahmā and Jina. (Schrader Ibid p. 105). Buddha, however, introduced a spiritual transformation of the chakra of Dharma-Brahmā he worshipped at Bodhgayā. When the Buddhists took it in a material concrete form, the Dharma-Chakra was made of 12 or 24 spokes (as on Sarnatha Asoka pillar). Schrader thinks that the 12 spoked Sudarśana of the Pancharātra Vaisnavas indicated 24 Avatāras; so the 24 spokes of the Buddhist Dharmachakra were equivalent to the 24 Buddhas. Buddhists also say that the Dharmachakra is plenteous in twelve ways or Nidanas. (Dharmachakrapravartana sutta § 21).

Buddha then preached his trinity of the Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha. The Dharma worship of Bodhgayā was converted by him into his 'Dhamma'. The Saṃgha arose out of the organisation of the Jātila Trirātri Sanyāsins of Bodhgayā. Buddha himself took the position of Brahmā of Bodhgaya and Banaras. The Bodhi tree was Brahmā; so was the Bodhi tree taken by the Buddhists as the Buddha (early Buddhist sculptures indicate it). "Geiger has shown that the term Dharma is not rarely used in the Buddhist texts as a substitute for the Brahman of the Upanishads, while the term Brahman itself is occasionally preserved (Digha. Nikaya III. 232). The famous

phrase "Wheel of the Law" is also paralleled by Brahmachakra 'Majj. Nikaya I.69), the Dhammayāna by Brahmayāna (Sam. Nik. V. 5.). The Tathāgata is not merely an incorporation of Dhamma but also of the Brahman, he has become not only the Dhamma but also the Brahman (Digh. Nik. III.80 ff), the Dhamma even claims the worship which is the lot of the Brahman in the Upanishads (Sam. Nik. I. 138 ff; Ang. Nik. II. 20), nor in choosing the term Dharma for the system was Buddhism without Upanishad precedent" (Keith-Ibid p. 550). Geiger refers to God Dharma as described in the Brihad Aranyaka (I. 4. 14) and the Mahānārāyaṇī Upanishad (XXI. 6). We have already noted that in the Sela Sutta, Buddha declared himself to be "the incomparable Dharmarāja and turning the wheel" (Sutta Nipata III, 7. 7). In the Lakkhana Suttanta (Digh Nik. 30) Buddha is described as having a wheel mark on his feet and seven convexes, golden skin, statue like a Banyan tree, body and jaw as that of a lion. All these marks also make the Buddha a replica of Brahmā. The wheel is the wheel of Dharma, seven convexes refer to Saptarātra cult, golden skin is similar to that of Hiraṇyagarbha, the Banyan-statue is the Banyan—Brahmā of Bodhgayā. Lion was also a symbol of Brahmā (cf. Bri. Ar. Up. "Purusha is the Lion" and Mahabharata XII. 337-17). Thus it was the trinity at Bodhgaya that gave rise to the trinity of Buddhism Brahmā's position was occupied by the Buddha.

The Trirātra cult of Brahmā, Dharma and Śiva thus gave rise to the Triratna of the Buddhists. According to the Brahmanda purāṇa, Rūdra under request from Brahmā created Buddha, and Buddhatama etc. The meaning of this can never be understood unless we know the religion that existed at Bodhgayā at that time. It is now clear that not only the religious but many other conditions existing at Bodhgaya gave rise to many of the peculiarities of Buddhism. It will be shown in the next chapter how Buddhist buildings and art also originated from structures related to the Rātra cults of Brahmā at Gaya and surrounding places.

territory had 84000 cities, 84000 palaces. The king had 84000 divans, elephants, horses, chariots, gems, wives, yeomen, nobles, cows, garments and dishes. This numeral is also found to be favourite of the Jains. The age of the first Jina is 84 lacs and so was that of the eleventh. The age of the eighteenth Jina Arānātha, son of Sudarśana and Mitrā is 84000 years. The Buddhist story of Sudarśana is also related to 84000. This indicates a common source for both the Jain and Buddhist legends. The interval of time between Neminātha and Pārśvanātha is also said to have been 84000. years. The total number of citizens of Vaiśali was "twice 84000." This number 84000 must have originated from Brahmā's years which is said to be equivalent to 12000 human years. The Jains and Buddhists multiplied this 12000 by 7. The Buddhists sometimes multiplied the 7 days stay of Buddha at the site of the tree by 7 and say that he spent 49 days there. Aśoka is said to have erected 84000 Dharmamahārājikas. The Pancharātra cult ascribes 12 or 24 spokes to the Sudarśana. The number 12 is multiplied by 7 ($12 \times 7 = 84$) and then by 1000 by the Buddhists and Jains. These absurd figures, as already said, arose out of the infinity of 'Kāla.' Hence this number arose out of the legends of Kāla and Kālachakra or Dharmachakra of the Saptarātra cult.

(5) The best Chamber in the palace was called "Mahāvvyūha kuṭāgāra" which is explained by Rhys Davids by reference to Sungod being regarded as a unity of the four Vyūhas of Vāsudeva. Sun's Vyūha is no doubt known in early literature, but the word 'Kuṭāgāra' here reminds us of the 'Kuṭastha Brahman or Purusha of the Vedas. Brahmā's Vyūhas might therefore have been the original source of the Pancharātra Vyūha of Vāsudeva and of Sudarśana of this story.

(6) The name of the king's queen was Subhadrā. According to the Vaiṣṇava cult Subhadrā was the sister of Vāsudeva and Saṁkarshana. How this story made Subhadrā the wife of Sudarśana, the symbol of Krishna, cannot be therefore explained if Sudarśana here is taken as the Sungod and the origin of the story be traced in the Vaiṣṇava Vāsudeva cult. It may be

explained only if we take Sudarśana here to be equivalent to Kāla or Dharma in the sense of Yama God. The Vedic legend of the love of Yama and Yamī may explain how Subhadrā could be made the wife of Sudarśana. The origin of Goddess 'Subhadrā' at Puri is also inexplicable and certain traditions make Subhadrā the wife of Jagannatha. But Jagannatha also like this Sudarśana might not have been originally Vishnu or Krishna, but was perhaps god Kāla or Dharma (or Yama); Samkarshana (Balarama) was Śiva (as indicated before) and Subhadrā was the wife of Yama or Śiva. That the original name of the goddess was not Subhadrā but 'Ekāmanasā' is known from the *Bṛhatsamhita* (Ch. 58). *Ekāmanasā* was a form of Devi (Śiva's consort) or perhaps wife of Dharma as his iconography shows. The Buddhist legend about Sudarśana as well as Jagannātha images were thus the outcome of the conversion of Dharma-Śiva tritātra cult into the Vaiṣṇava Pañcharātra cult. (Also See 'History of Medieval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa' by P. Mukherjee) (See Appendix D).

(7) That the legend is a story of Kāla Brahmā cult is apparent from the moral of the story "How transient are all component things" which may be compared with what the *Mahābhārata* says about destruction of everything by Kāla. The king Sudarśana after his death came to the happy world of Brahmā. This clearly indicates the story to have arisen from the Kāla-Brahmā Rātra cult of pre-Buddhist period. King Sudarśana was identified with Buddha in a previous birth; so was Brahmā identified with Buddha by the Buddhists.

The Buddhist prayer to the trinity may well be compared with what we find in the *Bṛhad aranyaka Upanishad* (1. 5. 17) "I am Brahman (Buddha), I am the sacrifice (Dharma), I am the world (Saṃgha). Thus Buddhism arose from the cult of Brahmā and it may be shown that Buddhism also died due to the revival of the old Brahmā cult.

It has been shown before that the Vedic cult was the Deva yāna which had suppressed the Pitṛiyāna or the Brahmā cult. Buddhism arose from a Pitṛikārya at Bodhgaya i.e. from the

still surviving Brahṁā cult of Bodhagayā. But this Buddhism (a new form of Piṭṛiyāna) was again suppressed by the Mahāyāna which, advocating the worship of so many gods, was but a new form of the Devayāna. According to Kern, "The Mahāyāna is a pantheistic doctrine with a theistic tinge, in which Buddha takes the place of the personified masculine Brahman of the Vedānta". Further decay of Buddhism came with the rise of the Vajrayāna (a Tantric form of Buddhism) Buddhism in the 10th century. One of the maxims of this school was "He that does not know the chief First Buddha (Ādi Buddha) knows not the circle of time (Kālachakra). He that does not know the Kālachakra knows not the exact enumeration of the divine qualities. He that does not know this enumeration does not know the Vajradhara." According to B. Bhattacharya, the Ādi Buddha is thus the same as Kālachakra and Vajradhara. We have seen how Buddhism arose from the Kālachakra and Brahṁā (Vajradhara and Ādideva). Buddhism again, before its total disappearance, revived the old cults of Brahṁā and Kālachakra which had at first been thrown to the background (See B. Bhattacharya—J. B. O. R. S., 1923, p. 114). The conception of Trikāya in the Mahāyāna system also makes the Dharmakāya approximate to the idea of Brahṁā. These 'Kāya' theories were also revivals of the 'Tanu' or Ratu cults of Brahṁā. The origin of the Buddha was from Māyādevi (of the Navarātra cult, similar as shown before, to Tantricism) and its final blow came from the Tantric form of Buddhism and ultimately from the Māyāvāda of Śaṅkarāchārya.

The doctrine of Piṭṛikārya at Bodhagayā which was an important factor of the rise of Buddhism continued to exert influence on Buddhism ever afterwards. The Buddhists believed in the Pretas and offerings of rice and other things to them. In the Pretakārya they performed, gifts of rice and other things were made to the monks of the order. The popularity of this ceremony is said to have existed more among the Rājagīriyas and the Siddhantikas. That it was known and more popular with the Rājagīriya monks is natural for the fact that Rājagīr

was closely associated with Bodhgayā which was, as shown already, the chief centre of the Srāddha cult at that time.

In the Kathāvatthu (vii.6) we find references to this fact. "It is held by some for instance the Rājāgīriyas and Siddhantikas that because of the word :

'By what is given here below

They share who, dead, among the Petas go'—gifts of robes etc. cause life to be sustained there" (Commentary on Kathāvatthu). Similarly, "Do not the Petas thank him who gives a gift for their advantage, are not their hearts appeased, are they not interested, do they not obtain gladness? Was it not said by the Exalted one:—

'Even so whatever on earth is given

Doth react the hopeless Peta shades

By what is given here below."

(Cf. Khuddakapāṭha 6. VII)

Similarly in the Anguttara Nikaya (III. 43) we find, "was it not said by the Exalted one 'Bhikkus, there are these five matters which parents, if wishing for a child to be born to them, contemplate? Which are the five? Cared for (they think), he will care for us; or he will do our work; he will continue our family; he will inherit our prosperity; he will institute offerings to the departed parent shades (Petas),

'And then again an offering

To Peta-shades he'll institute."

This last saying is but an echo of what the Ramayana says about the utility of a son—"that some may give Pinda for the dead parents at Gayā." This subject was also treated in the Milinda Panho which refers to offering of rice to Pretas. (Hardy Manual of Buddhism p. 438). The Buddhist doctrines thus prove the antiquity of the Srāddha cult of Gayā. This Srāddha cult was closely associated with the Rātra cults of Brahmā—Dharma and Śiva, which thus existed at Bodhgayā at the time of the Buddha.

Buddhism thus arose out of the Trirātra cult of Brahmā-Dharma-Śiva. In the other parts of eastern India, the Saptarātra

cult and the Pancharātra as well as the Navarātra cults must have been flourishing at that time. The Vishnupāda had perhaps been already founded at Gayā. Even after the rise of Buddhism, Gaya and eastern India did not altogether give up the old religions. Bodhgaya appears to have continued to be a place of gods Brahmā—Dharma and Śiva till the later Śunga period. Buddhism had already entered there at the time of Aśoka, but could not make a great head-way. It was after a later Śunga king who erected the Bodhgaya Rails and perhaps a chapel over the Vajrāsana that the place began to be more and more a Buddhist site.

CHAPTER V

BRAHMĀ CULT AND BUDDHIST ART

As Buddhism arose out of the prevailing Brahṁā-Dharma cult of Gaya and other parts of eastern India, so had Buddhist art its foundation on the art of those countries, which was associated with the worship of Brahṁā-Dharma and other related gods. It has already been pointed out that except the probable iconic representations of Brahṁā at Mohenjodaro, no pre-Buddhistic image of that god has yet been discovered. The reason was that Brahṁā and Dharma were not usually worshipped in iconic form but only in symbols. Siva's image and Linga form have both been discovered at Mohenjodaro. Several gold plaques containing perhaps the figures of the Earthgoddess have however been discovered, which may be placed in the Maurya period. After the Mohenjodaro period, with the advent of the Vedic rites and the Upanishad philosophy, image worship might have been obsolete among the high class people. But images of gods associated with the rātra cults might have been made and worshipped by non-Vedic people of various places. The images of Yakshas and Yakshinis which are known to have existed at Bodh gaya even at the time of the Buddha might have been related to the rātra cults of Brahṁā. Barua refers to such images of Suchiloma and Khara and their temples existing at Gaya (see 'Gaya and Bodhgaya Vol. 1.—Barua). Similarly no stone architecture has been discovered which may definitely be said to belong to the pre-Asokan period. Both the houses and images of gods might have been made of wood and other non-permanent materials. Thus when Buddhism arose, Buddha who occupied the position of Brahṁā was not worshipped in image form, but there were many symbols by which the Buddha was indicated.

Asoka for the first time introduced stone architecture and

sculpture, but even then and afterwards Buddha's image worship was not known to the people. But even during the time of the Buddha, there were existing in India religious structures and symbols which appear to have been adopted by the Buddhists. The Chaityas and Stupas are admitted by all scholars to have been adopted by the Buddhists from the pre-Buddhistic religious structures. It may therefore be shown that many of the Buddhist structures and symbols might have been adaptations from those associated with the Brahman-Dharma cult, though such pre-Asokan specimens are not available to us owing to their being in perishable materials.

The most notable and earliest of the Buddhist structures of Asokan period are his huge free standing monolithic pillars bearing animal capitals. Several scholars have suspected that these pillars were perhaps made after the pre-existing models erected in India. They also thought that they were originally worshipped by the people. Though their art might have been influenced to a certain extent by foreign art, the spirit and idea behind them were nothing but thoroughly Indian. No scholar, however, has been able to thoroughly explain the features of these pillars. It will be shown below that these may well be explained with reference to the Brahman-Dharma cult.

We do not know what exactly was the religion of Asoka before he adopted Buddhism. It is quite likely that in setting up the pillars he was influenced by the prevailing non-Buddhistic religious ideas of his times. The emphasis given by Asoka on the word 'Dhamma' throughout his inscriptions, and the denomination of 'Dhamma Stambha' given by him to these pillars naturally lead us to think that perhaps Asoka belonged to the Deva-Dhamma sect which is known to be existing at the time of the Buddha. V. A. Smith was of opinion that Asoka was at first a Saiva. It has already been shown that Siva was closely associated with god Dharma and Brahma. Some scholars believe that Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta was not a follower of the Brahmanical faith but was a Jaina. The Mauryas were called 'Vrishalas'

which might be due to their not belonging to the Brahmanical faith of that time. It may therefore be concluded that Asoka was also not a follower of the Brahmanical religion, but might have professed the non-Brahmanical Brahma Dharma cult of Magadha. It is certain that Asoka even after his conversion to Buddhism, had great faith in the gods, as his title 'Devanampiya' indicates. There is, therefore, no doubt that he was highly influenced by the 'deva' cults of that period. It is also remarkable that in the Bhabru edict he gave emphasis on 'Sevan' of the precious sayings of the Buddha. His Pillar Edicts were seven in number, and his Rock Edicts were fourteen (7×2).^{*} It might be that his original religion was a form of the Saptaratra cult.

* Scholars have tried to explain the Asokan pillar in various different ways. The animal capitals on the pillars are explained as Buddha, and other animals in the abacus (Horse, elephant, Bull, Lion and a Dharma Chakra between them) are regarded as symbols of various Hindu gods who had been subordinated to the Buddha. Thus the Lion was the symbol of Durga, Horse that of the Sun-god, Bull as that of Siva, and Elephant of Indra. Others regard the animals on the top as gods of different quarters. Various other explanations have been offered. But none appears to be sufficient to explain all the features. Of the animals on the round abacus, four mentioned above, may be regarded as symbols of Hindu deities, but scholars have not said anything about the 'Swan' found on some of these specimens. Similarly the Dharmachakra on the abacus cannot be regarded as the symbol of the Buddhist Dharmachakra for it had become already a Buddhist symbol, it was not suppressed by Buddhism, if we believe this to be a creation of the Buddhists.

These animals may be properly explained only by reference to the Brahma cult. In the Vedas Bull is Indra, Sun or Prajapati (Brahma) (see Atharvaveda). According to Stella Kramrisch (Hindu temples, p. 332) a Lion was originally placed on the Uttara vedi—the throne of the Supreme Spirit, and Vae (who we know was also the wife of Brahma) was a lioness.

(Voj. Samhita, V. 12). Lion in the banner of Surya is explained as 'Dhormn', in the Vishnudharmmottarom (III. chap 67). : It is said in the Upnnishad (Aitareya Up. III, 1. 3.), "Āsya gavaḥ Puruṣa hastino yot kimchit prana, sarvaṁ tat prajñanetttram prajñopratiṣṭhita prajñanam Brahma." So all animals are Brahma. The animals on the top of the Asokan pillars, such as elephants, bulls, lions and horses (not found yet) are therefore representations of Brahma. Asoka made Buddha represented as "the Gaja-tame" (the chief elephant); for Brahma's place had been taken by the Buddha (see last chapter). Zimmer also took elephant as being closely associated with Brahma.

The animals in the abacus were really the gods who were formerly subordinate to Brahma and now to Buddha. The swan represented 'Brahmo', the 'Dharmachakra' was the Dharma's symbol as at Bodhgaya. Of the other animals, Bull was Siva, horse was Surya, Lion was Brahma etc. who were now subordinate to the Buddha. The Asokan abacus-figures thus indicate that Buddha had suppressed the cult of Brahma, Dharma, Siva and also the Vedic Indra. Lion here might also represent the Devi of the Navaratra cult or Mahavira, the Jina, whose symbol was also Lion (see chapter on Jainism). The Sarnath abacus contains the Dharmachakra of 24 spokes. It has already been said that these 24 spokes were the 24 tattvas of Samkhya or the 24 gods of all the principal ratra cults taken together ($3+5+7+9=24$) of which the Samkhya was a philosophic interpretation.

The exact nature or the prototype of the Asokan pillar may be understood from the Vedic Skambha-Brahma hymns. These hymns invoke a supreme deity called Skambha identified with Prajapati and Brahma (Atharva Veda X 7 and 8). These Vedic hymns refer to Brahman or Brahma and the descriptions indicate that most probably a pillar (Skambha or Sthupa) was the object of prayer and prayed as the symbol of Brahman and Brahma. It is said "He who knows him who is supreme and he who knows the Lord of life, these know the loftiest power divine" (AV X. 7. 17.). The pillar is thus called the "Lord of life." "Skambha is all this world of life" (AV. X. 8. 2). "That highest

Brahma, whose *base* is earth, his belly air, who made the sky to be his head" (Ibid verse 32). "To whom deities with hands and feet etc. present unmeasured tribute". "In whom Adityas dwell, in whom Rudras and Vasus are contained". Where the gods worship the loftiest power divine". "A mighty being in *creation's centre*, to him the rulers of the realms bring tribute". These verses indicate that Brahma as the lord was being worshipped by various gods who 'dwell in him' referring also to their presence on the pillar. The Skambha had a bowl on it, of which it is said "The bowl with mouth inclined and *bottom upward* hold stored within it every form of glory." "Thereon together sit seven rishis who have become this mighty one's protector". This inverted cup refers to the cup-shaped capital of the pillar and indicates the relations of seven rishis with Brahma or Brahma, as noticed in the intra cults. "Within the womb, Prajapati is moving; he though unseen, is born in sundry places. He with one half engendered all creation". This description perhaps indicates that the figure of Brahma should not be shown in full, as 'unseen' and 'one half' indicate. "One is the wheel, the tires are 12 in number, the naves are three". The Sudarsana chakra is said to have 12 spokes.

With these hymns of the Atharvaveda we may compare a chapter in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which appears to be a summary of the Skambha Brahma hymns (Br. A. Upanishad II. 2. 1 ff) and thus describes Brahman in the form of a pillar in the following way:—

"The Sisu (young animal) is the *Central Life*. This is its abode, this the upper part of the abode; life is the *pillar* (sthuna) food is the *rope*. The *seven deities* who cause its indestructibility surround it worshipping. They are *Rudra, Parjanya, Aditya, Agni, Indra, Earth goddess* and Heaven. The Earth adores it with the lower lash (i.e. looks upwards, as it is below Brahma) and the Heaven with the upper lash (for it is above Brahma)".

"Whoever knows the young animal with its abode, its pillar and its rope destroys the *seven inimical brother's sons*". (notice the number 7).

"There is the *Soma cup* whose mouth is below and whose foot is above; therein is put *glory* of various kinds. On its margin are the *seven rishis*, and speech is the Eighth as holding communication with Brahṁā." "The Soma cup is the head". "The Rishis are the winds". "They are Gotama, Bharadvāja, Viśvamitra, Jamadagni, Vasishtha, Kāśyapa and Atri".

From the Skambha Brahṁā hymn and the Upanishad chapter, we learn that the pillar (Skambha or Sthūna) is the abode of the Purusha (Brahṁā), the central life. On the upper part is the Purusha. The shaft (i. e. pillar) represents life (Jīvātman). The rope is attached to the pillar, as there are rope-decorations on Asokan pillar. Seven or eight gods are placed on the pillar below the animal. In the Asokan pillar there are in the abacus four animals who may be identified with the gods mentioned in the hymn. Rudra (Bull), Aditya (Horse) and Indra (elephant) are easily recognised. The round abacus is the world of life—gods live therein. The Asokan capital is an inverted lotus. In other Indian pillars, we get inverted 'kalasa' or cup, which is the inverted 'Soma cup,' mentioned in the hymn and the Upanishad, full of glory. On the margin of the eup are said to be eight Rishis—these may refer to the eight flutes of the capital or the octagonal shaft of the pillars.

Thus the Vedic hymn and the Upanishad undoubtedly refer to the Skambha Brahman as a pillar. The Asoka pillar resembles in many respects the Skambha as described in the Vedic texts. But there are also certain points of difference.

On the Asokan pillar there are often four animals set back to back, so that only the front portions or half of the animals may be visible. According to the Pancharātra cult, the creator Purusha is Kuṭastha or he is called 'Samastipurusha'. According to the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 'Purusha is the lion'. According to the Skambha hymn, Purusha is 'unseen' or he is with 'one half'. The four animals whose all parts are not visible thus represent the 'Kuṭastha' or 'Samasti' (i.e. coalesced) Purusha'. According to the Mahabharata, Purusha is Viśvadrik. Asokan pillars also hence contain four animals looking on four

quarters Brahṃā had four heads and faces and hence also there are four animals.

The model of the Asokan pillar was the Brahṃā Stambha, but the pillar was modified to a certain extent, due to the Skambha being a Vedic symbol and the Asokan pillar being derived from the non-Vedic Brahṃā-Dharma cult of Magadha. The Asokan pillar was round (not eight-sided) as it was more related to the Dharma cult. To the worshippers of Dharma, the pillar was the Vajradanda. Even the Brahmayupa is called in the Brahmanas 'Vajra' (cf. *Āitareya Br.* II 1 — "Yupa is vajra", "Vajra is the voice of Prajapati"). According to the Brahmanda Purana "Vishnu once created a big Padma supported on a high vajradanda, from which arose Brahṃā". The Lotus capital is Prithivī from which arose Brahṃā. It has been suggested that there was a Brahṃā Yupa, required at the time of Sraddha, at Bodhgaya (see 'Buddhism' ch. IV). Asoka might have taken his model from that famous Yupa of the Mahabharata and turned it into his Buddha Stambha or Dharma Stambha.

The animals on the top are thus Buddha (instead of Brahṃā). The world of gods (i.e. the circular abacus) contains those gods who became subordinated and were thus offering tribute (as the Upanishad says) to the Buddha. These gods were Brahṃā (Swan or Lion), Sun, Siva, Indra and Dharma (Dharmachakra). The chakra, often found on the top of the Lions, is the Heaven looking down towards the Lions, and Prithivī in the form of the inverted lotus looks up from below towards Buddha, and below it still is the Vajradanda (circular shaft) of Dharma or Yama. Thus did the Brahma-Dharma cult of Magadha give rise to the Asokan pillar. Pillar was worshipped in the Vedic period and also perhaps worshipped at the time of the Buddha and so was it adopted by Asoka. Worship of a pillar is depicted in a scene on a sculpture found at Mathura (Catalogue of Lucknow Museum fig. 2 (a)). R. Chanda also suggested that Asokan pillars were perhaps objects of worship (*Mem. Arch. Survey* no. 30 'The beginnings of art in Eastern India').

The traditions giving rise to the various features of Asokan

pillars and later Indian pillars continued in later periods and may be noticed in the description of a god called Vyoma in the Vishnudharmottaram (Part III). The Vyoma is described in the following way :—The lowermost portion should be square, then circular, then slightly four sided and placid like the Meru. This is called Bhadrapiṭha, the third part of Vyoma. This is characteristic of all Bhadrapiṭhas. The middle portion which is foursided is known as Sambhava.

On the topmost portion, there should be a lotus with eight beautiful petals and on the pericarp in its midst, the Sungod. On the petals should be the Dikpālas in their proper places. Underneath the Bhadrapiṭha one should fix the earth. 'Know the lotus to be the upper regions, all the chief gods are close at hand there. Vyoma is full of all gods, and one gets all desires by performing its worship.

This description of the Vyoma indicates a platform like structure with a lotus on top. The lower part is a Bhadrapiṭha i. e. a pedestal or base on which gods sit or pillars stand. The animals on the top of the Asoka pillar were gods and under them was the Vyoma (the lotus or the round abacus or Bhadrapiṭha. Thus the pillar was the Piṭha or Seat of the gods. As there were gods by the side of the lotus in the Vyoma, so were the gods close to the Gods on the top of the pillar. This tradition of a Piṭha or seat of god is found described in the Saiva religious book named Isāna-Siva-Gurudeva-Paddhati (Vol. III. p. 103) which says, "In the Piṭha is Ananta." "Dharma is red and is in form a bull, Jñāna is a Siṃha of Śyāma colour, Vairāgya is a Bhūta of yellow colour and Aiśvarya is a white elephant." This indicates that on a seat, these four animals (viz. a lion, a Bhūta (goblin), a bull and an elephant) were to be depicted. The Asokan abacus, as the seat of the God, is hence found decorated with all the animals except the Bhūta, as directed in the saiva work. But there were also four animals as on a piṭha. Here also it should be noted how, of the occupants of the Piṭha, one is said to be Dharma depicted as a Bull and the other Jñāna (Brahmā or Buddha, Prajñā of Upanishad) as a lion. The form of the shaft of the

Vyoma—first square, then circular, again square and so on indicates the origin of the form of pillars in Hindu temples.

Some other Buddhist structures may thus be explained. The Buddhist Triratna symbol—a circle at bottom with two forks above and a symbol in between the forks—appears to have had its origin from the plan of the Bodhgaya edifices. The tree with the Bodhimanda gave rise to the circle, the forks were the two rails around the Vajrasana and the tree (the Bodhidrum chapel, as in Bharhut Rails sculptures) and the inner symbol looks like a Yonipīṭha of Siva (which perhaps existed to the east of the vajrasana, as indicated in ch. IV) or the Kaustubha jewel of Vishnu (with whom the Bodhgaya structure had perhaps no relation at all).

The Buddhist 'Dharma chakra,' indicating its existence at Sarnatha, which was often depicted as a symbol of the Buddha preaching the first sermon, has two deers on its two sides. These indicate 'the wheel at Mrigadava'. The two deers were representations of Brahmā and Dharma worshipping the chakra (or Buddha), as both these gods are known to have been born as a deer. (See ch. IV). The Vajrasana, as indicated before, was the seat or symbol of Dharma. In Bengal, Dharma is worshipped on a small fourlegged stool of stone (specimens in Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta).

The origin of the Buddhist Stupa may be traced from the Brahmā-Dharma cult. The stupa was a burial mound, either over the dead body or over bones or ashes. The Satapatha Brahmana refers to such structures (Śmaśāna) but according to it, this should be square, whereas the Asuras and the Easterners build it round. The Buddhist stupa arose amidst the easterners and hence it is round. How the stupa became an object of worship to the Buddhists will be understood if we take it originally to have been the 'abode of Dharma rāja' or Dharma rājika, the name by which the Buddhists call it. It was a symbol of Dharma also called 'Rājā' (cf. Rājāyatana of Bodhgaya—ch IV). The Buddhist stupa contained on the uppermost part a structure of umbrella shape (tee) with a rail around (the Harmikā). These

Aiḍuka in the Vishnudharmottaram (Part III). The meaning of the Buddhist stupa will also be clear from the reference to the Aiḍuka.

According to the above mentioned text, "By worshipping Aiḍuka, the worship of this *world* (Prithivī) should be (regarded as) accomplished". The text further runs as follows:—"The learned should make a Bhadrapiṭha furnished with four pleasing steps in all directions. One should place another Bhadrapiṭha above it and another over it like that. A *phallic* figure should be placed on the top by one who knows; it should be furnished with the lines of a phallus. In the midst of it one should show a quadrangular fixed *staff*. Over it should be thirteen *steps*. Over it there should be a shining raft. Over it again there should be made a well-rounded staff inserted into a half-moon and decorated by solar and lunar discs. The steps and the shining raft should be known as the fourteen worlds. In the phallus is the god Mahesvara and the circular staff is *Brahma*. The quadrangular stick is Janārdana. The three Bhadrapiṭhas should be known as the three Gunas. The three worlds containing all that is movable or immovable are said to be the receptacle of the three qualities. Below the worlds, but above the phallus, the lokapalas should be represented on four sides carrying spears in hands—Virūḍa, Dhṛitarāshṭra, Virupākṣha and the powerful Kuvera". "Know Sakra, the lord of the host of the Devas and Dhṛitarāshṭra the lord of Ganas, to be *Yama*, the conductor of the world. Know Virupākṣha to be Varuna, the lord of waters, and Kuvera, the king of kings, as the master of wealth-giver".

This description of the Aiḍuka, though difficult to properly understand, appears to be a later Hinduised form of the ancient burial mounds. Its worship is said to be the worship of the 'world', as the stupa worship has also shown to be. There were three bases of the Aiḍuka called the three worlds; the stick, like that supporting the umbrella, is called *Brahmā*, the stairs (as of stupa) and the raft represent fourteen worlds—all these reveal the similarity of the structure with a Buddhist stupa. The four

Lokapālas and Indra to be placed on the Aḍuka appear to be similar to the five pillars found to be on each side of the drum of the Amaravati stupa. The Aḍuka is thus a structure representing phallus worship. Brahmā, Pṛithivī, Yama as well as Indra and Vishnu were also associated with it. The old traditions of association of stupa with earlier gods are retained, but later Hindu ideas were interpolated in the structure.

The Chaityas, which were the temples of the Buddhists and contained a stupa inside, meant originally a religious structure (temple) as well as a sacred tree. The origin of both these senses may be discovered from the earliest association of such structures with the Brahmā cult. The word Chaitya is derived from 'citi' (a vedi or platform or the Buddhist stupa). According to the Satapatha Brahmana, "By erecting the citi, Brahmā is hilt" (Sat-Br. VI. 1. 2. 17). According to the Brahmanda Purana (IV. 37), Brahmā is called 'Citi' and when Brahmā assumed the 'Varāha' form, his face was also the citi. It is perhaps from this tradition that the door of ancient Chaityas was made slightly tapering inwards, just as the face of a standing boar will look like; for door is known as the 'face' (mukha-entrance) of a temple. (see Agni Purana ch. 61. 19-27). If 'citi' was Brahmā, Chaitya was originally the temple of Brahmā. Brahmā was also worshipped as a tree and hence Chaitya also meant a 'sacred tree' or the Brahmā tree. It is likely that Brahmā was at first worshipped as 'boar' (Boar incarnation) in the Gaya region and during the time of the Buddha there was a temple of 'Suchiloma (meaning a boar) Yaksha at Bodhgaya, which might refer to a temple of Brahmā in his 'Boar' form. The Buddhists called the earlier gods, as the Vedic people called non-Vedic gods, as Yakshas. Hence Buddhists explain the word Chaitya 'as temple of Yakshas'. The Buddhists believed trees to be the home of gods. In a Jātaka story the tree-god is called by the name of 'Deva-Rāja'. This name 'Rājā' also reminds us of the names of Dharmarāja and the Rājāyatāna of Bodhgaya. The trees as Chaityas were also thus associated with the Brahmā-Dharma cult. R. Chanda also believed that Chaityas were ori-

first nothing to do with the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. The Hindus perhaps adopted it from the Buddhists from the 3rd or 4th century A. D. But this theory has not been accepted by many scholars. Coomarswamy believed that both the Hindu and Buddhist motifs of this type had a common source in the figure of 'Abundance' which existed in early times. J. N. Banerjee is of opinion ((*Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 371. f. note) that Goddess Sri was known, though in a different form, from the Maurya or the post-Maurya period, as he identifies the Besnagar female statue as that of Sri. These latter surmises also cannot fully explain this figure and similar such figures which Foucher takes as representing the Nativity of the Buddha.

Foucher notices on the Bharhut sculptures some swans around lotus flowers arising out of a vessel and he failed to explain the meaning of these two pairs of Hamsas with reference to the life of the Buddha (*Ibid* pl. II. fig. 4). The swan, as has been already noticed above, was the sacred bird of Brahmā, and as such it occurs on the Asokan Pillar and the earliest Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. Hamsa was the Vāhana of Brahmā and later on of Saraswati, wife of Brahmā. This Bharhut figure may therefore be regarded as the figure of Brahmā represented as lotus. The vessel from which the lotus issues forth was 'Pṛithivī', as discussed in connection with the origin of the stupa. As Brahma's sacred numeral was '4', his vāhanas 'swans' have also been depicted as of that number.

Similarly in several Sanchi reliefs two lions are found by the side of the lotus plant. Foucher explains this as a symbol of the Buddha who was known as Sakyasimha. It has already been said that Buddha was so called, because he had occupied the place of Brahmā who was also a lion (Hari), as on the Asokan pillar.

Another similar sculpture is also altogether inexplicable to Foucher (*Ibid* pl. III, fig. 5). In this panel a lotus plant comes out of the mouth of a tortoise. The meaning of it, Foucher admits, 'escapes us'. The meaning will be clear if we take the tortoise as the 'Kurma' (tortoise) incarnation of Brahmā. Brahmā in that form saved 'Pṛithivī'; hence in this sculpture, the tortoise supports the lotus or Pṛithivī.

first nothing to do with the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. The Hindus perhaps adopted it from the Buddhists from the 3rd or 4th century A. D. But this theory has not been accepted by many scholars. Coomarswamy believed that both the Hindu and Buddhist motifs of this type had a common source in the figure of 'Abundance' which existed in early times. J. N. Banerjee is of opinion ((Development of Hindu Iconography, p. 371. f. note) that Goddess 'Sri' was known, though in a different form, from the Maurya or the post-Maurya period, as he identifies the Besnagar female statue as that of Sri. These latter surmises also cannot fully explain this figure and similar such figures which Foucher takes as representing the Nativity of the Buddha.

Foucher notices on the Bharhut sculptures some swans around lotus flowers arising out of a vessel and he failed to explain the meaning of these two pairs of Hansas with reference to the life of the Buddha (Ibid pl. II, fig. 4). The swan, as has been already noticed above, was the sacred bird of Brahmā, and as such it occurs on the Asokan Pillar and the earliest Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. Hamsa was the Vāhana of Brahmā and later on of Saraswati, wife of Brahmā. This Bharhut figure may therefore be regarded as the figure of Brahmā represented as lotus. The vessel from which the lotus issues forth was 'Prithivī', as discussed in connection with the origin of the stupa. As Brahma's sacred numeral was '4', his vāhanas 'swans' have also been depicted as of that number.

Similarly in several Sanchi reliefs two lions are found by the side of the lotus plant. Foucher explains this as a symbol of the Buddha who was known as Sakyasimha. It has already been said that Buddha was so called, because he had occupied the place of Brahmā who was also a lion (Hari), as on the Asokan pillar.

Another similar sculpture is also altogether inexplicable to Foucher (Ibid pl. III, fig. 5). In this panel a lotus plant comes out of the mouth of a tortoise. The meaning of it, Foucher admits, 'escapes us'. The meaning will be clear if we take the tortoise as the 'Kurma' (tortoise) incarnation of Brahmā. Brahmā in that form saved 'Prithivī'; hence in this sculpture, the tortoise supports the lotus or Prithivī.

first nothing to do with the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. The Hindus perhaps adopted it from the Buddhists from the 3rd or 4th century A. D. But this theory has not been accepted by many scholars. Coomarswamy believed that both the Hindu and Buddhist motifs of this type had a common source in the figure of 'Abundance' which existed in early times. J. N. Banerjee is of opinion ((Development of Hindu Iconography, p. 371. f. note) that Goddess Sri was known, though in a different form, from the Maurya or the post-Maurya period, as he identifies the Besnagar female statue as that of Sri. These latter surmises also cannot fully explain this figure and similar such figures which Foucher takes as representing the Nativity of the Buddha.

Foucher notices on the Bharhut sculptures some swans around lotus flowers arising out of a vessel and he failed to explain the meaning of these two pairs of Hamsas with reference to the life of the Buddha (Ibid pl. II. fig. 4). The swan, as has been already noticed above, was the sacred bird of Brahmā, and as such it occurs on the Asokan Pillar and the earliest Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. Hamsa was the Vāhana of Brahmā and later on of Saraswati, wife of Brahmā. This Bharhut figure may therefore be regarded as the figure of Brahmā represented as lotus. The vessel from which the lotus issues forth was 'Prithivi', as discussed in connection with the origin of the stupa. As Brahma's sacred numeral was '4', his vāhanas 'swans' have also been depicted as of that number.

Similarly in several Sanchi reliefs two lions are found by the side of the lotus plant. Foucher explains this as a symbol of the Buddha who was known as Sakyasimha. It has already been said that Buddha was so called, because he had occupied the place of Brahmā who was also a lion (Hari), as on the Asokan pillar.

Another similar sculpture is also altogether inexplicable to Foucher (Ibid pl. III, fig. 5). In this panel a lotus plant comes out of the mouth of a tortoise. The meaning of it, Foucher admits, 'escapes us'. The meaning will be clear if we take the tortoise as the 'Kurma' (tortoise) incarnation of Brahmā. Brahmā in that form saved 'Prithivī'; hence in this sculpture, the tortoise supports the lotus or Prithivī.

first nothing to do with the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. The Hindus perhaps adopted it from the Buddhists from the 3rd or 4th century A. D. But this theory has not been accepted by many scholars. Coomarswamy believed that both the Hindu and Buddhist motifs of this type had a common source in the figure of 'Abundance' which existed in early times. J. N. Banerjee is of opinion ((Development of Hindu Iconography, p. 371. f. note) that Goddess Sri was known, though in a different form, from the Maurya or the post-Maurya period, as he identifies the Besnagar female statue as that of Sri. These latter surmises also cannot fully explain this figure and similar such figures which Foucher takes as representing the Nativity of the Buddha.

Foucher notices on the Bharhut sculptures some swans around lotus flowers arising out of a vessel and he failed to explain the meaning of these two pairs of Hamsas with reference to the life of the Buddha (Ibid pl. II. fig. 4). The swan, as has been already noticed above, was the sacred bird of Brahmā, and as such it occurs on the Asokan Pillar and the earliest Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. Hamsa was the Vāhana of Brahmā and later on of Saraswati, wife of Brahmā. This Bharhut figure may therefore be regarded as the figure of Brahmā represented as lotus. The vessel from which the lotus issues forth was 'Prithivi', as discussed in connection with the origin of the stupa. As Brahma's sacred numeral was '4', his vāhanas 'swans' have also been depicted as of that number.

Similarly in several Sanchi reliefs two lions are found by the side of the lotus plant. Foucher explains this as a symbol of the Buddha who was known as Sakyasimha. It has already been said that Buddha was so called, because he had occupied the place of Brahmā who was also a lion (Hari), as on the Asokan pillar.

Another similar sculpture is also altogether inexplicable to Foucher (Ibid pl. III, fig. 5). In this panel a lotus plant comes out of the mouth of a tortoise. The meaning of it, Foucher admits, 'escapes us'. The meaning will be clear if we take the tortoise as the 'Kurma' (tortoise) incarnation of Brahmā. Brahmā in that form saved 'Prithivi'; hence in this sculpture, the tortoise supports the lotus or Prithivi.

associated with the *Brahmā* cult.

The famous figure on the Bodhgaya Rail of the Sun's chariot may also be explained, and that more accurately, if we take it to be a chariot of *Brahmā*. Bodhgaya or Gayā is not known as having any special relation with the sun cult. The later Sungas (*Mitra* kings) who raised the rail also cannot be regarded as being mainly worshippers of the Sun, unless their title '*Mitra*' be regarded as pointing to that religion; but their coins do not indicate any such association. On the other hand, it has been shown that Bodhgaya was a seat of *Brahmā*-Dharma cult from a very early period which was suppressed by Buddhism. The presence of the so-called Sun image at that place cannot be properly explained. Moreover, though sun is known in the Vedas to have a chariot of four horses, his seven horses were more popular in ancient India. Several other such four-horse chariots of *Surya* have, however been discovered in India (The Bhaja cave relief etc.). It is quite probable that such *Surya* images also had their prototype in that of the Bodhgaya rail which was an image of *Brahmā*'s chariot. This originated from the sun-worshippers identifying their god with *Brahmā*. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (1. 6. 4. 1) says '*Prajāpati* becoming *Savitṛi* created living beings.' This makes *Prajāpati* (*Brahmā*) an earlier god than *Savitri* (Sun); but the sun worshippers hereby identify the two gods. The *Satapatha Brahmana* (XII. 3. 5. 1) also states '*Savitā* is *Prajāpati*'. Thus we find that there was an attempt on the part of the Vedic Indians to identify their god *Savitā* (sun) with the earlier god *Brahmā*. The chariot of the Sun also therefore might have arisen from that of *Brahmā*. The original motif of such chariots appears to have been that of *Brahmā*'s chariot.

The description of *Brahmā*'s chariot is found in the *Mahabharata* (XII. 236—Hitabadi edition, Calcutta). It describes the car of *Brahmā* in the following way. '*Jiva* is the *Ratha* which shines in *Brahmaloka*. *Dharma* is the *upastha* (seat for the driver). *Hri* is the *Varutha* (cover of the chariot). *Upāya* and *Apāya* are the *Kuvara* (Yoke poles). *Apāna* is the axle, *Prāna* is the *Yuga*, *Prajñā* is *Āyu*. *Jiva* is the *Bandhana*, *Chetanā* is

All these sculptures therefore indicate that the cult of *Ṛṣṭhivī* and *Brahmā* was known in Indian pre-Buddhistic art and it was then taken up by the Buddhists, Jains and Vaisnavas. The last turned the figures of *Sri* or *Ṛṣṭhivī* into that of *Lakshmi* wife of *Vishnu*, and the Buddhists into *Māyādevī*. The Jains also placed the 'Gaja-Lakshmi' figures on the doors of their buildings, which cannot refer to the images of *Māyā*. In the Ananta cave at Udayagiri, where such a figure exists on the door, there are behind the elephants two swans. This figure also therefore should have originally been that of *Brahmā's* wife 'Sri' or *Ṛṣṭhivī*.

A similar figure from Kosam has to its left a bull standing with a garland round its neck (Cat. Allahabad Museum). The bull here may thus be regarded as the image of 'Dharma' who is also known to have married *Lakshmi* as the daughter of *Brahmā* (*Markandeya Purana*).

The so-called figures of *Māyā* therefore must have originated from the pre-Buddhistic *Brahmā* and *Ṛṣṭhivī* (mother goddess) cult. *Brahmā's* daughter or wife was *Ṛṣṭhivī* or *Sri*. Her association with *Nāgas* bathing her may be explained if we take the elephants as symbols of cloud. *Naga* cult is associated with water, and in Bali island *Naga Vāsuki* is an attendant of *Varuna* (lord of waters). Hence *Nagas* may have been shown pouring water on earth. *Ṛṣṭhivī* is also associated with *Nagas* or serpents who hold her on their head. *Brahmā* as *Nārāyana* rests on the serpent *Ananta*. *Sri* arose from the sea along with *Airāvata*. Thus though Vaisnava *Lakshmi* is not specially related to 'Nāgas', *Lakshmi's* prototypes may be shown to have been closely associated with *Nāgas*. The Buddhists, of course, depicted the Gaja-Lakshmi figures on their monuments as symbols for their mother-goddess *Māyādevī*. The name 'Māyā' also was taken from the names of the 'three mothers' of the *Pancharātra* cult which also, as already shown, arose out of *Brahmā's* *Ratra* cults. The *Vishnu-Dharmamottaram* differentiates 'Lakshmi' from goddess 'Sri' and the image of the latter only is said to be 'washed by elephants'. Thus these images were of pre-Vaisnava 'Sri', a goddess originally

associated with the *Brahmā* cult.

The famous figure on the Bodhgaya Rail of the Sun's chariot may also be explained, and that more accurately, if we take it to be a chariot of *Brahmā*. Bodhgaya or Gayā is not known as having any special relation with the sun cult. The later Sungas (*Mitra* kings) who raised the rail also cannot be regarded as being mainly worshippers of the Sun, unless their title '*Mitra*' be regarded as pointing to that religion; but their coins do not indicate any such association. On the other hand, it has been shown that Bodhgaya was a seat of *Brahmā*-*Dharma* cult from a very early period which was suppressed by Buddhism. The presence of the so-called Sun image at that place cannot be properly explained. Moreover, though sun is known in the Vedas to have a chariot of four horses, his seven horses were more popular in ancient India. Several other such four-horse chariots of *Surya* have, however been discovered in India (The Bhaja cave relief etc.). It is quite probable that such *Surya* images also had their prototype in that of the Bodhgaya rail which was an image of *Brahmā*'s chariot. This originated from the sun-worshippers identifying their god with *Brahmā*. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (I. 6. 4. 1) says '*Prajāpati* becoming *Savitṛi* created living beings.' This makes *Prajāpati* (*Brahmā*) an earlier god than *Savitṛi* (Sun); but the sun worshippers hereby identify the two gods. The *Satapatha Brahmana* (XII. 3. 5. 1) also states '*Savitā* is *Prajāpati*'. Thus we find that there was an attempt on the part of the Vedic Indians to identify their god *Savitā* (sun) with the earlier god *Brahmā*. The chariot of the Sun also therefore might have arisen from that of *Brahmā*. The original motif of such chariots appears to have been that of *Brahmā*'s chariot.

The description of *Brahmā*'s chariot is found in the *Mahabharata* (XII. 236—Hitabadi edition, Calcutta). It describes the car of *Brahmā* in the following way. "*Jiva* is the *Ratha* which shines in *Brahmaloka*. *Dharma* is the *upastha* (seat for the driver). *Hṛi* is the *Varutha* (cover of the chariot). *Upāya* and *Apāya* are the *Kuvara* (Yoke poles). *Apāna* is the axle, *Prāna* is the *Yuga*, *Prajñā* is *Āyu*. *Jiva* is the *Bandhana*, *Chetanā* is

the Vandhura, Āchāra is the Grahanemi. Darśana (sight), Sparśa (touch), Ghrāṇa (smell) and Śravaṇa (hearing) are the *four horses*. Prajñā is the nāhi (inside seat), Sarvatantra (all scriptures) is the whip, and the charioteer is Jñāna (knowledge). Kshetrajña (Ātman) is seated therein. Sraddhā and Dama are at the front. Tyāga is the best follower and Dhyāna is the gain acquired."

The most noticeable part of this description is the explanation of the four horses of such chariots. That four horses are in the Vedic texts also associated with Prajapati is known from the white Yajurveda in which we find reference to the four-horsed chariot of Prajapati (Yajur Veda IX. 10-Griffith's note). The figure of the rider (Brahman or Ātman) in the Bodhgaya rail has not been depicted in human form. A chattra with a disc below indicates the rider. This chattra may be the Bodhi tree and the disc is, the replica of the Dharma chakra (vajrāsana) beneath the tree. The Epic refers to the charioteer as Jñāna, and Dharma as the seat of the charioteer. But as the seat is not depicted at Bodhgaya, the charioteer may be Dharma himself. The two female figures on two sides of the charioteer are Sraddhā and Dama. Dama is equivalent to Dhriti (Dama gave birth to Dhriti—Mahh. XII. 160) who along with Sraddhā is known to be wives of Dharma. (Mark. Purana 50.21). Brahmā's chariot is also known to have one wheel, as this chariot has (Ath V. X. 8. 4.). To the Buddhists, the chariot might mean the Saṃgha. Buddha and Dharma along with Saṃgha are depicted as making progress on the four quarters indicated by the four horses. Thus the Bodhgaya figure may be taken as that of Brahmā Dharma's chariot.

Though such figures which have been discovered at other places of India might have been representations of the Sunod, all of them cannot be so explained. A plaque from Patna containing such a four-horsed chariot has a swan-like bird behind the chariot. This figure cannot but be regarded as a chariot of Brahmā, as the Swan indicates (Patna Museum catalogue fig. 52).

We may compare the description of Brahmā's chariot in the

Mahabharata with that of Kāla (also associated with, or equivalent to Dharma) found in the Atharvaveda (Av. XIX. 53). The hymn runs thus:—

“Prolific, thousand-eyed and undecaying, a horse with seven reins, Time bears us onward. Sages inspired with Holy knowledge mount him. His chariot wheels are all the worlds of creatures. This time hath seven rolling wheels, and seven naves, immortality is the chariot axle.” In this hymn Kāla himself is regarded as a chariot. This also refers to several things being ‘Seven’ in number. This shows the Saptarātra cult of Kāla or Dharma.

The Aitareya Aranyaka has also a similar description of a chariot (Ait. Ara. II. 3. 8.). “There is a chariot of the gods which destroys desires (Anakāmamāra). Its seat is Speech, its two sides the Ears, the horses the eyes, the driver the mind. Breath (Prāna) mounts upon it”. Sayana explains the chariot as one of Hiranyagarbha (or Brahmā). Anandatīrtha explains Anakāmamāra as ‘Prāna has no desires and delights in Māyā i. e. Ramā. He further explains the ‘uddhi or seat as Ramā in snake form, srotre’ (cars) as Chandra and his wife. The ‘mind’ is explained as ‘Rudra’. All such descriptions of chariot in the Vedic and Epic Texts point to their relation with the Brahmā cult. Hence it has been said in a previous chapter that Brahmā was worshipped in the form of a chariot (see Chapt. 2).

The Ratna-cchāṅkrama Chaitya at Bodhgaya has already been mentioned before. Its origin must have been the small wall on which people before performing śrāddha there used to place the Vasudhārā. The Vasudhārā is poured even today by the Hindus on a wall, on which a lump of cowdung is placed. In placing the cowdung, it is pressed by the palm of hand, the traces of the fingers being thus printed on the cowdung. The figure of the jewelwalk shrine on the Bharhut Rail contains a platform with small dots in two rows (supposed by Buddhists to be the lotuses which blossomed on the place where Buddha walked) and several palm marks below them. These palms have not been explained by any scholar yet. I have no

ginally temples of pre Buddhist days (Ibid—M A S I).

The Buddhist Rails undoubtedly arose from ancient wooden rails round the non Buddhist 'Stupas' and the *Brahmā* trees. The earliest Buddhist rails contained figures of lotuses on them, which symbolised the earthgoddess (*Padma* is *Prithivī*) who was associated with *Brahmā* and *Dharma*. The number of the piece bars of the rails as well as the lotuses on them was three on the Bodhgaya Rails, for Bodhgaya was primarily a seat of the *Triratna* cult. When the *Triratna* was converted into *Triratna*, the bars and lotuses signified the *Triratna* of the Buddhists.

The *Jātaka* stories and *Jātaka* scenes on the Buddhist Rails must also have arisen from the doctrine of rebirth as found in the story of *Kaushika* mentioned in the *Matsya Purana*. The builders of the Bodhgaya rails—*Brahmamitra* and *Indragiri Mitra* call themselves '*Kosikiputra*'. They, therefore, perhaps first introduced the system of depicting the *Jātaka* story scenes on the Rails at Bodhgaya. In imitation of it, such scenes were placed on the *Bharhut* and *Sanchi* Rails. The *Bharhut* and *Sanchi* Rails were either later contemporary with or later than the Bodhgaya Rails, for otherwise we cannot explain how the *Ratna-chañkrama Chaitya* of Bodhgaya might have been represented on the *Bharhut* Rail sculptures (see below) (Also see '*Sunga dynasty*' J B R S Vol 25, Pis I and II).

The figure of a goddess standing or sitting on a lotus, or with two elephants pouring water on the figure, as found on many Buddhist monuments has been identified as an image of Buddha's mother *Mayadevi*. The eminent French scholar *Foucher* tried to show that *Lakshmi's* connection with elephants being not clear in ancient Hindu legends, this motif first originated from the history of Buddha's nativity. Buddha is said to have been bathed by two *Nagas* (men of *Naga* tribe) immediately after his birth. As the word *Naga* means also 'elephants' (or serpents), the figure of *Maya* is shown being bathed by elephants, indicating thereby the birth of the Buddha (as Buddha's image could not be made at that time) (*Foucher—Nativity of the Buddha—Mem Arch S I* no 46). *Foucher* therefore believed that this figure had at

first nothing to do with the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. The Hindus perhaps adopted it from the Buddhists from the 3rd or 4th century A. D. But this theory has not been accepted by many scholars. Coomarswamy believed that both the Hindu and Buddhist motifs of this type had a common source in the figure of 'Abundance' which existed in early times. J. N. Banerjee is of opinion ((*Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 371. f. note) that Goddess Sri was known, though in a different form, from the Maurya or the post-Maurya period, as he identifies the Besnagar female statue as that of Sri. These latter surmises also cannot fully explain this figure and similar such figures which Foucher takes as representing the Nativity of the Buddha.

Foucher notices on the Bharhut sculptures some swans around lotus flowers arising out of a vessel and he failed to explain the meaning of these two pairs of Hamsas with reference to the life of the Buddha (*Ibid* pl. II. fig. 4). The swan, as has been already noticed above, was the sacred bird of Brahmā, and as such it occurs on the Asokan Pillar and the earliest Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. Hamsa was the Vāhana of Brahmā and later on of Saraswati, wife of Brahmā. This Bharhut figure may therefore be regarded as the figure of Brahmā represented as lotus. The vessel from which the lotus issues forth was 'Prithivi', as discussed in connection with the origin of the stupa. As Brahma's sacred numeral was '4', his vāhanas 'swans' have also been depicted as of that number.

Similarly in several Sanchi reliefs two lions are found by the side of the lotus plant. Foucher explains this as a symbol of the Buddha who was known as Sakyaśiṃha. It has already been said that Buddha was so called, because he had occupied the place of Brahmā who was also a lion (Hari), as on the Asokan pillar.

Another similar sculpture is also altogether inexplicable to Foucher (*Ibid* pl. III, fig. 5). In this panel a lotus plant comes out of the mouth of a tortoise. The meaning of it, Foucher admits, 'escapes us'. The meaning will be clear if we take the tortoise as the 'Kurma' (tortoise) incarnation of Brahmā. Brahmā in that form saved 'Prithivi'; hence in this sculpture, the tortoise supports the lotus or Prithivi.

the Vandhura, Āchāra is the Grahanemi. Darśana (sight), Sparśa (touch), Ghrāṇa (smell) and Śravaṇa (hearing) are the four horses. Prajñā is the nābhi (inside seat), Sarvatantra (all scriptures) is the whip, and the charioteer is Jñāna (knowledge). Kshetrājña (Ātman) is seated therein. Sraddhā and Dama are at the front. Tyāga is the best follower and Dhyāna is the gain acquired."

The most noticeable part of this description is the explanation of the four horses of such chariots. That four horses are in the Vedic texts also associated with Prajapati is known from the white Yajurveda in which we find reference to the four-horsed chariot of Prajapati (Yajur Veda IX. 10-Griffith's note). The figure of the rider (Brahman or Ātman) in the Bodhgaya rail has not been depicted in human form. A chattra with a disc below indicates the rider. This chattra may be the Bodhi tree and the disc is, the replica of the Dharma chakra (vajrāsana) beneath the tree. The Epic refers to the charioteer as Jñāna, and Dharma as the seat of the charioteer. But as the seat is not depicted at Bodhgaya, the charioteer may be Dharma himself. The two female figures on two sides of the charioteer are Sraddhā and Dama. Dama is equivalent to Dhṛiti (Dama gave birth to Dhṛiti—Mabh. XII. 160) who along with Sraddhā is known to be wives of Dharma. (Mark. Purana 50.21). Brahmā's chariot is also known to have one wheel, as this chariot has (Ath V. X. 8. 4.). To the Buddhists, the chariot might mean the Saṃgha. Buddha and Dharma along with Saṃgha are depicted as making progress on the four quarters indicated by the four horses. Thus the Bodhgaya figure may be taken as that of Brahmā Dharma's chariot.

Though such figures which have been discovered at other places of India might have been representations of the Sungod, all of them cannot be so explained. A plaque from Patna containing such a four-horsed chariot has a swan-like bird behind the chariot. This figure cannot but be regarded as a chariot of Brahmā, as the Swan indicates (Patna Museum catalogue fig. 52).

We may compare the description of Brahmā's chariot in the

Mahabharata with that of Kāla (also associated with, or equivalent to Dharma) found in the Atharvaveda (Av. XIX. 53). The hymn runs thus:—

"Prolific, thousand-eyed and undecaying, a horse with seven reins, Time bears us onward. Sages inspired with Holy knowledge mount him. His chariot wheels are all the worlds of creatures. This time hath seven rolling wheels, and seven naves, immortality is the chariot axle." In this hymn Kāla himself is regarded as a chariot. This also refers to several things being 'Seven' in number. This shows the Saptarātra cult of Kāla or Dharma.

The Aitareya Aranyaka has also a similar description of a chariot (Ait. Ara. II. 3. 8.). "There is a chariot of the gods which destroys desires (Anakāmamāra). Its seat is Speech, its two sides the Ears, the horses the eyes, the driver the mind. Breath (Prāna) mounts upon it". Sayana explains the chariot as one of Hiranyagarbha (or Brahmā). Anandatirtha explains Anakāmamāra as 'Prāna has no desires and delights in Māyā i. e. Ramā. He further explains the 'uddhi or seat as Ramā in snake form, srotre' (ears) as Chandra and his wife. The 'mind' is explained as 'Rudra'. All such descriptions of chariot in the Vedic and Epic Texts point to their relation with the Brahmā cult. Hence it has been said in a previous chapter that Brahmā was worshipped in the form of a chariot (see Chapt. 2).

The Ratna-chañkrama Chaitya at Bodhgaya has already been mentioned before. Its origin must have been the small wall on which people before performing śrāddha there used to place the Vasudhārā. The Vasudhārā is poured even today by the Hindus on a wall, on which a lump of cowdung is placed. In placing the cowdung, it is pressed by the palm of hand, the traces of the fingers being thus printed on the cowdung. The figure of the jewellike shrine on the Bharhut Rail contains a platform with small dots in two rows (supposed by Buddhists to be the lotuses which blossomed on the place where Buddha walked) and several palm marks below them. These palms have not been explained by any scholar yet. I have no

gious art of India. Buddhist architecture and sculpture were both outcome of pre-existing structures associated with the orthodox and heterodox worship of Brahmā, Dharma and Siva. The image of the Buddha in the purely Indian style also arose out of Brahmā's or Siva's image (Bṛhat Saṃhita ch. 58).

The similarity of the Brahmā cult with that of Babylon has already been indicated. The art of this religion may also be shown to have a resemblance with that of the Assyrian religion. Ashur, the national god of Assyria was associated with the Bull, the Eagle and the lion. In India, too, Brahmā was the bull, swan and lion. Ashura is called the 'Bull of Heaven'.

Similarly, the Assyrians had a sacred tree which became conventionalised. It was the 'Holy Tree of Life' and may be compared with what the Vedic texts say about the Brahmā-skambha or the Brahmā-pillar 'Lord of Life', 'World of Life', 'Life is the Pillar' and so on (see above). According to Mackenzie this tree of life was universally adored in the East and preserved in the religious system of the Persians. The flower of the Assyrian tree was formed of seven petals. The tree looked like a pillar and is thrice crossed by conventionalised bull's horns which reminds us of the association of 'Sikh' with the Rātra cults (see ch. I). The tree gave shelter to four creatures—a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. These four may be compared with the lion, bull, swan and horse in the abacus of the Aśoka pillar.

The 'Wheel of Life' of Assyria was a symbol of life and enclosed a god of war and fertility. The Dharmachakra similarly perhaps enclosed 'Kāma' or 'Yama' god of death and Brahmā, god of creation. The god of war had a trident headed arrow resembling a lightning symbol. Mackenzie takes it to be like Agni of India. It was associated, according to him, with the

story of Garuḍa stealing Soma or Amṛita for gods and both Garuḍa and wheel became associated with Vishnu. It has been shown that Vishnu's chakra perhaps arose out of the Kālachakra or Dharmachakra of the Brahmā cult. The trident of Assyria may be compared with the trident of Siva as Kāla. The "wheel of life" of Assyria may thus be regarded as similar to the Dharma-chakra or the Kālachakra. The Asokan pillar and art of that period need not therefore be regarded as based on the Persian or Assyrian models, but both perhaps had their origin from a common cult of Asia.

Conclusion

The review of the cult of Brahmā explains many problems of Indian religions and may supply valuable information regarding the evolution of Indian religions. It appears that in the pre-vedic days, when religion and magic were inseparably connected, there were various forms of Rātra cults in which the gods worshipped were Water, Earth, Fire, Air and Ether. Some worshipped any one or two and so on of these, regarded as creators of the world. The worshippers of Earth were the worshippers of the goddess of earth and gave rise to the worship of the Mother goddess and later on, in a very early period, to the Śākta or Tantric religion. Gradually these religions gave rise to the idea of a single creator—Brahmā. The old god of the Water-worshippers was perhaps known as Nārāyaṇa and he was now identified with Brahmā. The worship of Dharma, Siva, Surya and other minor gods was also gradually assimilated by the Brahmā cult. The śrāddha cult was also thus amalgamated. It is very likely that all these religions had among their doctrines truth, purity, Ahimsa, self control, austerities, Yoga and various other magical cults. It is also probable that the worship of the gods known to the early vedas also existed in the pre-Vedic period. Besides the god or goddess of Earth, even a Water-god, a Fire-god (pre-Vedic Agni), a wind God (Marut) and Vyoma (perhaps Sungod, as noted in the Vishnudharmottaram) were worshipped. They were the Rātra Gods. But, for reasons, now unknown, gradually the cult of sacrifices arose in India and many of the old gods were

incorporated in the Vedas, but their worship was to be performed in the form of sacrifice. Hence followed a great religious schism, the Vedic people forming one group and the worshippers of the old Brahmā (Rātra gods) continued their worship in the old method. The Vedic gods were called 'Divā' (from which arose the word 'Deva') and the gods of Brahmā cult were known as 'Rātra' gods—which was symbolised as the struggle of the Devas and Ashuras. The Brahmā or Ratra cults were for a long time regarded as Ashura or non-orthodox in character chiefly followed by the lower class people in some parts of India. But even then the old religions gradually changed the character of the Vedic religion. In eastern parts of India, from Brahmāvarta and Kurukshetra to Orissa, where the Vedic cult spread gradually and slowly, the majority of the people followed the Brahmā cult. In the north-west (Mathura region) the great personality of Krishna Vasudeva gave rise to the Vaiṣṇava-Vāsudeva Pancharātra cult. In Eastern India arose Jainism and Buddhism which gave a death blow to both the Vedic and the non Vedic cults, including that of Brahmā. But Buddhism fell a prey to the old religions and Vaisnavism became the predominant religion. Along with that arose the worship of Siva, Sakti goddesses, Sun and other gods, which gave rise to the modern form of Hinduism. The Vaisnava religion assumed the form of the Bhagavata-Pancharatra religion; and five religious sects arose out of the five gods of the old Brahmā cult. But Brahmā totally disappeared. Thus we find Krishna being called 'Bhagawan' himself or Narayana. Sun god was also Prajāpati or Brahmā; so was Siva-Brahmā's son Ganapati regarded as the son of Siva; and the goddesses Vāc, Saraswati, Sri, Umā, Ekānamsā and others, known as Nārāyaṇī, became the wives of Nārāyaṇa or Siva. The Vedic sacrifices were forgotten. But the old beliefs in image worship, ancestor worship (śrāddha), tree worship, sanctity of water, the old exclusiveness among the pre-historic sects in the form of the caste system, the sacred places of Brahmā and Siva—all survived in the Indian religions. The Philosophy of the Ratra cult gave rise to the Sāṃkhya; the Vedic sacrifice, whose power was called Brahman (after Brahmā) gave

rise to the Upanishad and the Vedānta philosophy. But the sāmkhya was followed by all religious sects. Many problems of Indian philosophy, religions and art may thus be solved if further investigation is carried out about the Brahmā cult.

It is also probable that the followers of the Brahmā cult were originally the people of India, though it is inexplicable how similar cults arose in various other parts of the world. The Aryan invasion may explain the similarity of the Vedic religion with that of other countries; but the resemblance of the earlier cults requires a new explanation. Whether a mediterranean race or Dravidians brought this cult or some of these matters may be supposed to have been brought by the Austric race to India cannot be definitely asserted (see Vedic India—Pusalkar). It may be that "India was the cradle of all civilisations"; the Brahmā cult was the cradle of all religions; and the Vedic culture was but a development of the old Brahmā cult of India. It might be that a single culture stretched from Magadha to the Mediterranean; and the Indus Valley, Egyptian, Sumerian and Cretan civilisations were but one and an earlier phase of this culture, and the Vedic, Persian, Assyrian and Hellenic cultures were but a later phase. Dogmatism is useless; but truth may be known only through hypotheses.

APPENDIX A

The Ramayana and the Ratra cults of Brahma.

1. Brahma is said to have come to Valmiki and asked him to compose the story of Rama. (R.I.ch 2) Valmiki composed the Ramayana in 500 sargas and 24 000 slokas. Here the numeral '500' and 24 thousand both remind us of the Pancharatra cult elaborated into 24 ratras.

2. The Monkeys are said to have been born at the command of Brahma. The monkeys were emanations of 'Kama' (a god associated with Brahma). (I.ch 17).

3. Ravana was a great devotee of Brahma and got supernatural powers through his boon from Brahma.

4. The story of Kusa (I. 32) points to the Sradha cult and Ratra cults.

Kusa is called Brahmayoni. His sons were Kusamba who founded Kausambi Kusanabha who founded Mahodaya (Kanauj), Amurtarajas who founded Dharmaranya (Bodhgaya and Gaya) and Vasu who founded Girivraja. The names Kusamba Kusanabha etc are associated, as the name of their father with Kusa and Sradha cult. Amurtarajas and Vasu are associated with the Sradha cult of Gaya and the Saptaratra cult

Kusanabha had 100 daughters who were married to King Brahmadatta of Kampili, (cf Brahmadatta of Panchala and Banaras) the manasa son of Rishi Chuli and Gandharva Somada. This echoes a non Vedic cult

Kusanabha's son was Gadhi whose son was Visvamitra who being a Kshatriya became a Brahmin through Brahma's boon (I. 65 19-20). This reminds us of the struggle between Brahma cult (of Brahmins) and other prevedic sects. Kusanabha's daughter, Kausiki is called Satyavati and 'Satye Dharma pratisthita'. This perhaps associates the story with the cult of god 'Satya'.

5. Visvamitra taught Satya Dharma' to Ramachandra. The Ramayana and the life of Ramachandra are great lessons on the 'Satya Dharma' or Truth, as well as cult of Satya, a Vyuha of the Ratra cult.

6. The anecdote of Ahalya has an analogy with the story of Dharmasila of the Gaya legend. Dharmasila was Dharmarata, wife of Dharma, but as she showed hospitality to Brahma, she was turned into stone (Sila). This appears to be a trace of conflict between Dharma and Brahma cult. Similarly Ahalya, wife of Gatama became stone for her showing favour to Indra. This appears to mean the survival of the Gotamakas' (who existed at the time of the Buddha) in their struggle against the Vedic cult of Indra. The Pitris are said in the Ramayana to have cured the curse of Indra. This indicates the acceptance of ancestor worship by the Indra worshippers. The revival of Ahalya appears to indicate the acceptance of Gotama's cult by the followers of the Satya cult.

7. The struggle between Ramachandra and Ravana may indicate that between the cult of 'Satya' and 'Dasaratra' cult (as the name 'Dasanana' indicates). The Satya cult (Ramachandra) was perhaps a Navaratra cult (Rama's birth being an Navami Tithi) and was the offspring of the Dasaratra cult (as Dasaratha, Rama's father, indicates). The struggle of Rama and Ravana was for Sita, who might represent the 'Earthgoddess' or Mother goddess cult. The Satya cult and Mothergoddess cult survived after their struggle with the Dasaratra cult. These struggles indicate earlier history of the Ratra cults. As the fish and boar incarnations of Brahma saved the Earthgoddess (cult); similarly Sita (Earthgoddess) was rescued by Ramachandra (god 'satya'). Ultimately Ramachandra abandoned Sita which may mean that the followers of the satya cult gave up the cult of Mothergoddess, which turned the Rama cult into a Vaisnava cult.

8. The fourth Tirthankara of the Jains 'Abhinandana-natha' was born in Ayodhya and had his symbol 'monkey'. This Jain may represent a cult similar to that in the Ramayanam (see chap. on Jainism). The Ramayana therefore was quite likely a religious book of the cult of god 'Satya' who later on became an avatara of Vishnu. Hence Rama was an avatara of Vishnu.

The Mahabharata refers to seven births of Brahma and of King Brahmadatta. But the details of the latter are known only from the Matsyapurana (ch 19, 20, 21). The story is related in the Purana along with the Sradha cult, perhaps a Saptaratra cult, and the legend of Yayati. The details of the story will show its affinity with the 'Janmontara' theory of the Buddhists.

1. Matsyapurana Ch. XXI—relates the worship of Pitris and then says that the sons of Kausika 'secured Vishnu's sacred Pada' (feet) in five births in succession. 'Vishnu's Pada' here may have an association with Gaya 'Vishnupada'.

2. Chapter XX—relates the story of Kausika's sons :

(i) Rishi Kousika lived in Kurukshetra.

(ii) He had seven sons, who were disciples of Gorga.

(iii) During a famine they ate up the Kapila cow of their father after sacrificing it in a sroddho ceremony.

(iv) For this fault, in their second birth, these sons were born as hunters in Jasapura; but they remembered their previous birth, due to their devotion to their parents. They later on began to follow 'Vairagya.'

(v) In their third birth, they were born as deer in the Kalanjara hill and remembering their previous births followed Jnana, Vairagya etc., and ultimately starved themselves to death near god Nilakantha (Siva).

(vi) In the fourth birth, they were born as Chakravaka birds on the Manasa Lake, but they followed 'Yoga' system.

(vii) In the fifth birth, four of the sons were born as good Brahmins. One of the remaining three was born as King Brahmadatta, son of King Vibhaja of Panchala. Two others were born as sons of that King's ministers.

(viii) Brahmadatta knew all sastras and yoga and could understand the language of animals. Due to a quarrel with his wife Sannati, he went to Hari and stayed there 'for Saptarata' which may mean 'for seven nights' or 'for learning the Saptaratra cult'.

(ix) The King Brahmādatta and his ministers all achieved emancipation in the fifth birth.

The Mahabharata refers to seven births of Brahmādatta. The Buddhists refer to emancipation of man in the seventh birth. The Puranas thus converted the Sāptaratra cult of Brahmādatta into the Vaisnava Pancharatra cult by ascribing only 5 births to the sons of Kausika. Moreover the remembering of previous births and understanding of language of animals etc remind us more of the Buddhist Jataka stories than the orthodox Vedic theory of Punarjanma. The theory of metempsychosis was a prevedic belief.

APPENDIX C

The legends of Trita

Trita or Trita Aptya was a Vedic god. He is mentioned as a great friend and ally of Varuna, an ancient god who was suppressed by Indra. At the same time Trita was a great friend of Indra too and helped the latter in his exploits. Trita is also associated with Soma Pavamana whose sacred number is found to be 'Seven' in many Vedic hymns.

Thus in the Rigveda we find 'Maruts reinforced the power and strength of Trita' (Rv viii. 7.19). 'Indra drinks soma by Vishnu and Trita Aptya's side.' (Rv viii. 12.10). In one hymn Trita is identified with Varuna (Rv viii. 41). In this hymn to Varuna, it is said 'Haste ye to honour Trita'. But Trita again is different from Varuna as 'Trita bears Varuna aloft in ocean' (Rv ix. 95.4).

Regarding his relations with Indra we find, "Trita, seeking the chief sire's intention, goes forth to combat." "Well skilled to use the weapons of his father, Aptya, urged on by Indra, fought the battle." Then Trita slew the foe seven-rayed, three-headed and freed the cattle of the son of Tvashtar (Rv X.8.). The enemy of Trita is Trisiras, the son of Tvashtar, called Visvarupa (Rv X.99). Similarly "Trita, made strong by the might he (Indra) lent him, struck down the boar with shaft whose point was iron" Here boar refers to 'Vritra.' "For us he shattered the forts of Nahusa, when he slew the Dasyus." (Rv X.99.6-7)

These verses indicate that Trita was accepted as a Vedic god. Scholars, however, believe that Indra-worship suppressed that of Trita and Varuna. Trita is also spoken of disdainfully in some Vedic hymns. Thus Adityas are invoked to consign all calamities and evils to Trita's dwelling far away. Trita is here associated with another called 'Dvita' (Rv viii.47). It is difficult to reconcile the two facts of Trita's being a Vedic god as well as a god hated by the Vedic people. The Vedas might thus have incorporated facts about Trita in two stages. He was at first an enemy of the Vedic gods. Some Vedic hymns indirectly refer to Trita being looked upon with jealousy by Ekata and Dvita who tried to kill Trita by throwing him into a well. Trita's enmity with Tvashtha's son is also difficult to understand, for Tvashtha was a Vedic god.

The puzzle about Trita may be solved if we look into the Mahabharata legends about Trita. In the epic it is said that Ekata and Dvita were cursed for their hostility to Trita and were born as monkeys during the time of Ramachandra. In another legend Ekata, Dvita and Trita were worshippers of Narayana in the Svetadvipa. In the story of Uparichara again they are called sages, sons of Brahma and they worked as priests in the sacrifice performed by Uparicara. The Mahabharata also refers to the war of Indra and Trita with Nahusa who wanted to become Indra. All these legends indicate that Trita was originally a non-Vedic god allied to the cult of Brahma. Hence he, as a son of Brahma, acted as priest of Uparicara who, as shown before, was peculiarly associated with the Pancharatra and Sraddha cult. Trita was hence hated by the Vedic people. Later on he appears to have been favoured by the Vedic Gods and fought against Indra's foes 'Trisiras', Vritra, and Nahusa. The names 'Trita', 'Ekata', 'Dvita' and 'Trisiras' all indicate their relations with a 'numeral'. The struggle was perhaps between the Triratna cult of Brahma and the Triratna Vedic cult. 'Dvita' and 'Ekata' also indicate the existence of Ekaratra or Dviratra cults.

Trita is taken as equivalent to the Titans of Greece, sons and daughters of Ouranos and Gaia, equivalent to Varuna and Earth goddess. He is also identified with Persian Triton.

APPENDIX D

The evolution of Jagannatha

In chapter IV of this book it was related in connection with the Sudarsana Jataka story, that Subhadra was called the wife of Sudarsana. It was hence suggested that this reference might give a hint to the effect that the images of Balarama, Subhadra and Jagannaatha were not originally those of the Vaisnava gods, but of Siva, Ekanamsa and Kala. A legend in the Matsya Purana has further confirmed our suspicion. In relating the story of origin of Kartikeya for killing the demon Taraka, it is related that Brahma was approached by the gods for finding out a means of killing the demon. On this, Brahma called for Nisa, born of his own 'tanu' (body). The goddess Nisa was asked by Brahma to enter into the womb of Menaka (wife of Himalaya) who was bearing Uma, and to mix up with Uma and to turn her colour into black. Nisa, Brahma said, would be worshipped by the people as Ekanamsa, or by various names by various sects—such as, worshippers of Brahma would call her Gayatri, Vaisyas would call her Bhu, Saivas as Saivi, others as Akshobhya, Kalaratri, etc. (Matsya Purana Ch. 154).

The Purana then relates the story of Uma's birth, her penance for Siva and the well-known story of the burning of Madana and so on. Siva and Uma then met together for sometime, but Siva taunted Uma for her black colour by calling her 'Krishna' (black). The Devi retorted by saying that Siva himself was Mahakala and hence black (M.P.Ch. 155). After this Uma, offended, again went to carry on Tapasya, but keeping an eye on Siva's not mixing with any other woman. But a demon assumed Uma's form and entered Siva's chamber. The demon was killed. The news of Siva's association with another woman so offended Uma that she was going to enter into the mouth of a lion which had come out of her mouth. Brahma appeared before Uma and gave her the boon of becoming white in colour. Uma then cast off her black skin, out of which again, arose goddess Nisa with ghanta in hand, three eyed, decorated with ornaments and wearing yellow robe.

Brahma asked her to go to the Vindhya hills, with that lion which was to be her vahana. The goddess, then called Kausiki, then went to the hill. It was afterwards that Siva and Uma again were married and Kartikeya was born and killed demon Taraka (Mat. P. Ch. 157 ff.).

This story indicates several things by which the Goddess Ekanamsa may be clearly associated with the Brahma—Siva—Kala cult.

(1) Nisa was a goddess born of Brahma. The name reminds us of 'Ratri' born of Brahma (ch. 1, above). She was to be called Ekanamsa after being mixed up with Uma in the womb. This shows how a Mother goddess, not at first identified with Uma (Siva's consort) was assimilated by the Saiva cult.

(2) The various forms and names of goddess Ekanamsa also show how the same Mother goddess, originally born of the Brahma cult, was worshipped in various forms by various people. The names, Gayatri, Bhu (i.e. Earth goddess), Kalaratri associate the goddess with the Brahma and Kala cult (as shown before).

(3) The rebirth of Nisa from the forsaken skin of Uma reminds us of Brahma's forsaking his Tanu, out of which the 'Ratri' arose. The name now assumed by her, viz. Kausiki, reminds us of the story of Kausika's sons and their rebirths.

(4) The association of Ekanamsa with the story of Kartikeya's birth also reminds us of the Mohenjodaro figure of Kumara's coronation by Brahma.

(5) That Siva was called by Uma (of black colour) as Mahakala perhaps indicates that the goddess Ekanamsa was really a consort of god Mahakala or Kala before this god was identified with Siva. The name 'Kalaratri' of the goddess also indicates that. Later on, Siva, Kala, Mahakala were all identified and so, were Bhu, Kalaratri, Ekanamsa—Kausiki etc. identified with Uma.

The Brihatsamhita clearly enjoins that between Balarama and Krishna (i. e. Jagannatha) should be

placed the image of goddess Ekanamsa. Her image with two hands should have a lotus in one hand; in four-handed or eight-handed images, she should bear lotus, books, rosary, kamandalu and other implements. This iconography of Ekanamsa makes her figure similar to that of Lakshmi, or Saraswati and also of Brahma. This also indicates the origin of the goddess from the Brahma cult.

The Sudarshana Jataka story mentioned above also refers to Subhadra as the wife of Sudarsana. Sudarsanachakra arose out of Kalachakra or Dharma-chakra. Subhadra between the figures of Jagannatha and Balarama also arose out of the figure of Ekanamsa. From this it may be concluded that the images of Jagannatha etc, had a previous history. Several stages may be traced in the history of this god.

(1) In the earliest stage, the three gods appear to have been Brahma, Prithivi or Kalaratri and Kala (or Dharma).

(2) In the next stage (as the Jataka indicates) Earth-goddess was called Subhadra as the name of Kala's consort. Bhadrakali, Kali, Bhadra and such names were later on given to Siva's wife—originally the names were undoubtedly associated with god Kala, Mahakala etc, not yet identified with Siva. The gods in this stage were therefore Brahma, Subhadra and Kala.

(3) After the rejection of Brahma cult by the upper class people, as of Dharma worship at Bodhgaya, Siva took the place of Brahma. Subhadra was now changed into Ekanamsa as the wife of Kala. The three gods were Siva, Ekanamsa and Kala.

(4) When the Ratra cult arose and Samkarsana was identified with Siva (see ch 1 above), Siva's place was taken by Samkarshana. Ekanamsa was now identified with Uma or she might have been represented as sister of Rudra, as the Vajasaneyi samhita (111.57) depicts. (See Banerjee Prabuddha Bharata 1954 pp. 6-7).

The three gods were Samkarshana, Ekanamsa (later still known as Krishna as in the Matsya Purana legend) and Kala.

(5) With the rise of Vnaisnava Pancharatra cult Samkar-sana became Balaramā; Kala became Krishna and Ekanamsa became Krishn or Subhadra as sist r of the two gods. Ekanamsa who was formerly black was transferred to another temple as Vimala, the stainless goddess.

Even if all these stages might not have existed, the Jataka story, the Brihatsamhita reference to Ekanamsa, and the Matsya Purana legend leave no doubt about the fact that the present images of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra could not have originated from Buddhism in Orissa. Buddhism cannot explain the origin of the female deity Subhadra. As the Gaya legend in the Puranas was misinterpreted by scholars as the story of suppression of Buddhism by Vaisnavism, the Puri legend has been similarly misunderstood. In fact it has been suggested before that the Brahma cult existed also in Kalinga even at the time of the Buddha, which led the merchants of that region to come to Boddingaya for offering Pinda to their relatives (*vide* the story of two merchants from Kalinga offering madhu-Pinda to the Buddha and Gayasura's body falling as far as Kalinga). Buddhism suppressed the Brahma cult at Bodhgaya and also perhaps of Orissa. But afterwards with the rise of Vaisnavism at Gaya and Orissa, Brahma cult was relegated to the position of a religion of the low class people. The Brahmins of Gaya were cursed by Brahma and the religion of Puri was called that of the Sabaras. The tradition of that period led to the abolition of caste in Puri. Jagannatha is still remembered as the "Daru Brahma Avatara" perhaps in reminiscence of Brahma worship in the form of a tree. The absence of caste system in the temple of Jagannatha cannot be explained with reference to Buddhism. If that was due to Buddhism, it ought to have prevailed in many other important Buddhist sites. In the 1st century B. C. Bhuvanesvara and hence Kalinga saw the predominance of Jainism under Kharavela. Before that Buddhism might have prevailed in Orissa during the time of Asoka only. Even before Asoka, the dominant religion of Puri and other parts of Orissa appears to have been the Brahma Siva cult. The goddess Ekanamsa might have thus existed in that period, and had revived after the fall of Buddhism and Jainism before the sixth century A.D. (time of

Varahamihira). But by that time the Pancharatra Vaisnava cult had spread there and Siva's worship was replaced by that of Vasudeva and Balarama. Several scholars have already suspected that the original religion in the Puri Temple was a form of Tantricism. The existence of the Vimala temple inside the temple compound also points to it. In no period can Buddhism be shown to have been predominating there so much as to give rise to the absence of caste system at Puri. This must have been due to the existence of such a religion which was mainly owned by some casteless or low class people and that must have been prevailing there since a prehistoric period. The similarity of the figures of the deities with Buddhist symbols may be explained by the fact that Buddhist symbols themselves had arisen out of the Brahma's symbols (see ch 5).